

MAKING SPACE FOR AN ANCHORING DEMOGRAPHIC: CONNECTING WITH
BLACK CHRISTIAN PROFESSIONALS WITH FAMILIES

By

HORACE A. HOUGH

A DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Submitted to
New York Theological Seminary
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

New York, New York, USA

2022

ABSTRACT

MAKING SPACE FOR AN ANCHORING DEMOGRAPHIC: CONNECTING WITH BLACK CHRISTIAN PROFESSIONALS WITH FAMILIES

By

HORACE A. HOUGH

Many Black churches are currently in a pivotal moment in their existence. As the presence of the generations who assure organizational support and leadership dwindle, the vacancy of a reliable anchoring demographic continues to expand. Although there has been significant research concerning the involvement of teenagers and those in their young adult years, finding the skills, resources, and consistency needed to organizationally advance a church can be better sought among adult professionals. The task of attracting people who have the commitment, skill sets, and willingness to anchor and grow the church can be daunting for any organization. Factors such as the demographic makeup of the current membership, demographic appeal of the organization, and an organization's reputation for relevance can all influence efficacies.

For First Baptist Church in Milford, CT, which worships in the Black Church tradition, this task is magnified by the small number of Black residents in the city. Therefore, to grow the congregation and to ensure its vivacity in the future, this project develops a model to attract, develop relationships with, and involve Black professionals between the ages of thirty-five and fifty years old with families. Through research, addressing their unique needs, and allowing them a place to utilize their specific experiences and skills, the results provide encouragement that Black churches can successfully attract those to "assume the mantle."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is surprising what can happen in three years. I am sure that 2019 through 2022 caused even the most weathered person to furrow their brow in confusion. Yet, through these capricious years I was anchored by an amazing village. To my wife and site team member, Kellee, who sets the academic bar just high enough for me to still graze it, albeit, with her assistance; to my parents, Rev. Walter, and Mrs. Bonnie Hough, who have been my loudest cheerleaders through this process; and to Dr. Christina Blair, who continued to encourage and push over these few years; thank you.

I am privileged, not only to reach a point of completion, but to have journeyed with people who pushed me academically. Thanks to Dr. Ivan Pitts along with, Sean, Shelia, and Huong. Your friendship, encouragement, and guidance meant more to the success of this project than you know. To my faculty advisor, Dr. Willie Francois III, no step of this dissertation could have happened without your patience, challenges, assistance, and counsel.

I would like to thank my Site Team, Rhonda Thacker, Tarik Thacker, Yves Joseph, Nicole Mayo Joseph, Theresa Jones, Kellee Hough, Shad Hargrove, and Hugh Oliver. Your commitment and assistance as we were all going through varying challenges is beyond commendable. I could not have asked for better support. Finally, I thank God for the journey, what was learned, and the work that it will birth.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE	
INTRODUCTION TO THE SETTING.....	1
THE CHURCH	1
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND IMPACT.....	4
PASTORAL INFLUENCE LEADING TO AUGMENTED CULTURE.....	9
WORSHIP AND THEOLOGY	14
INTERNET PRESENCE	16
SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIC GOAL.....	18
CHAPTER TWO	
PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS	24
ANALYSIS OF SETTING	26
GOALS	43
SUMMARY	44
CHAPTER THREE	
IMPLEMENTATION.....	45
GOAL ONE	46
GOAL TWO	53
GOAL THREE.....	60
CONCLUSION.....	63
CHAPTER FOUR	
RESEARCH QUESTIONS	64
BIBLICAL/THEOLOGICAL.....	67
<i>Sanctuary</i>	68
<i>Service</i>	82
SOCIOLOGICAL/PHYSIOLOGICAL.....	87
What are the needs of the Black Christian professional?	89
<i>Cultural-theological concerns</i>	89
<i>Communal Concerns and Transcultural Tension</i>	109
<i>Personal Concerns</i>	131
<i>Should the Church Aim to Address Their Needs?</i>	136
ORGANIZATIONAL RESEARCH.....	137
<i>Character and Competence</i>	138
<i>Expectations of Church Leadership</i>	143
CHAPTER FIVE	
MINISTERIAL COMPETENCIES	148
APPENDIXES	

APPENDIX A: PROPOSAL	160
APPENDIX B: PRE-PROJECT	202
APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS	204
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW WITH QUESTIONNAIRE PARTICIPANTS	226
Interview 1	226
Interview 2	233
Interview 3	233
Interview 4	238
Interview 5	244
Interview 6	250
APPENDIX E: PASTOR INTERVIEWS	258
Interview 1	258
Interview 2	262
Interview 3	271
Interview 4	276
Interview 5	284
APPENDIX F: ONE-ON-ONE AND WORKSHOP RESULTS	293
APPENDIX G: FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH SELF-STUDY	299
APPENDIX H: TIMELINE.....	310
BIBLIOGRAPHY	312

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION TO THE SETTING

I am the pastor of First Baptist Church in Milford, Connecticut. This historic Black American church has been a haven of worship since 1893. Thirty years after the Emancipation Proclamation, Black American Baptists in the area traveled ten miles to New Haven, Connecticut, to worship at Immanuel Baptist Church. Due to the era and lack of means, much of this travel was done by horseback, carts, and wagons. They would even bring their meals with them so that they could eat prior to their journey to Milford. Eventually, the traveling congregation came together to develop a local house of worship. This would come to be known as First Baptist Church.¹

Although Milford is majority White, over the years, the church has remained a consistent spiritual community hub for people who seek to worship and serve in the Black Baptist tradition. Despite that it has had twenty-one pastors in its one hundred twenty-nine year history, the church has continued to grow and serve in Milford's community.

The Church

First Baptist currently has 178 members. Although the median age is fifty-five years old, most of the active members are over sixty years old. Many of the current

¹ "Milford History: First Baptist Church Was Incorporated in 1895," *Milford Mirror* (May 24, 2019), <https://www.milfordmirror.com/news/article/Milford-history-First-Baptist-Church-was-13893683.php>.

members were a part of the church for thirty to forty years. Approximately only 10 percent of the combined membership and visitors live in the city. Congregants mainly travel from surrounding cities twenty to thirty minutes away. But, as highlighted in the aforementioned history, this was not always the case. Members who used to live in the city relocated to towns that either offered better opportunities for them and their families or sought a more diverse community. Nevertheless, they continue to travel back to the church to worship and serve. This reversal of travel ultimately sustained the membership. With Milford's Black population holding steadily at or below 3 percent, the potential for strong local membership growth was minimal.²

Milford is considered a working-class to middle-class town with 42.3 percent of adults holding a bachelor's degree or higher and a median income of \$89,778.³ Proportionally, the Church's congregation has maintained a large contingent of college-educated professionals, entrepreneurs, and high-level management.⁴ Over the last forty years, this demographic allowed the church to navigate building a new edifice, purchasing a parsonage, buying two neighboring houses of the church building, arranging and developing large community service programs, and other landmark ventures.

To better understand the membership demographic, it is important to understand their pride in their cultural history. One of the purchased flanking properties, the Samuel Durand House, was built in the early 1700s and is strongly rumored to have a room upstairs that was used as part of the underground railroad.⁵ To own property is already a

² Connecticut Data Collaborative, *Milford, Connecticut: CERC Town Profile 2019*, January 16, 2019, <https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/cerc-pdfs/2019/milford-2019.pdf>.

³ "Milford: New Haven County, Connecticut," *Connecticut DataHaven*, accessed December 10, 2020, <https://www.ctdatahaven.org/profiles/milford>.

⁴ Appendix G.

⁵ "Historic Buildings of Connecticut: Milford," *Historic Buildings of Connecticut*, accessed December 10, 2020, <http://historicbuildingsct.com/category/towns/milford/>.

point of pride within the congregation. However, to own property that has cultural significance has increased that pride exponentially. The membership has often offered impromptu tours of that room during our friends and family days and other events that draw visitors. That cultural pride is even on display in the form of a memorial headstone at the entrance of the Church, recognizing six Black soldiers from Milford who fought in the American Revolution but do not have official grave markers. The significance of the history of the congregation and church property have marked it as one of the locations of the Connecticut Freedom Trail, whose purpose is to document and designate sites that embody the struggle toward freedom and human dignity, celebrate accomplishments of the state's African American community, and promote heritage tourism.⁶ These traits and milestones have aided in continuing the tradition of First Baptist as a spiritual safe haven for Black Christians in the area desiring to worship in a culturally relevant spiritual community.

With a committed, skilled, and financially secure membership, the Church has thrived. Furthermore, the trifecta of an old building with minimal parking, limited public transportation options, and development restrictions due to being in the historical district⁷ has ultimately allowed the Church to operate comfortably for years without feeling significant pressure from sudden membership growth. Its committed congregation with their middle-class socio-economic standing permitted the Church to operate consistently without significant financial burden. Yet, with an aging demographic who no longer has the financial resources or ability to provide support the way they have in the past, a small

⁶ "List of Sites: Freedom Trail," *Connecticut Freedom Trail*, accessed July 30, 2021, <http://ctfreedomtrail.org/trail/freedom/sites/#!/first-baptist-church-milford>.

⁷ Buildings in the historic district cannot make aesthetic modifications without approval from the Milford Historical Society.

church is becoming smaller. This complication is the core of the project, to attract, develop relationships with, and involve Black Christian professionals with families. First Baptist will soon need an influx of congregants who bring skills, talents, and financial stability to continue its ministerial work. Thankfully, its history, worship style, membership, and origin can be helpful as it continues its legacy of welcoming Black professional families.

Community Involvement and Impact

Pre-Coronavirus-2019 Pandemic

Until recently, the Church maintained a strong presence in the community, who always relied on the membership and leadership to be a voice of hope and progress. From the first Black firefighter in the city serving as a committed deacon⁸ to having a pond previously named with a racial slur for Black people renamed after the church's most notable pastor, Rev. Charles Walker in honor of his work striving for unity,⁹ First Baptist has a history of connecting with the community. Pastor Walker was recently posthumously inducted into the Milford Hall of Fame.¹⁰ Some of his writings are even located in the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem, NY.¹¹ The Church also has a history of supporting national causes and providing aid outside of its local area.¹²

⁸ "Judge H. Walker Obituary - *Connecticut Post*," Legacy.com, accessed July 30, 2021, <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/ctpost/obituary.aspx?n=judge-h-walker&pid=189405704&fhid=4787>.

⁹ Dawn-Marie Streeter, "Pressing for Change of Venerable Names," *The New York Times*, February 26, 1995, <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/02/26/nyregion/pressing-for-change-of-venerable-names.html>.

¹⁰ Daniel Ortoleva, "Reverend Charles D. Walker," Milford Hall of Fame, accessed December 10, 2020, <http://milfordhalloffame.org/walker-reverend-charles-d>.

¹¹ Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, "Charles D. Walker Papers: 1923-1987," New York Public Library, accessed July 1, 2020, <http://archives.nypl.org/scm/20588>.

¹² The Church has a history of financially supporting organizations and efforts such as the NAACP, United Negro College Fund, Rainbow PUSH, The Southern Christian Leadership Conference

Sadly, over the years and as leadership has changed, the Church has lost what Ammerman, Carroll, Dudley, and McKinney would define in *Studying Congregations* as “ecological impact.”¹³ As Eiesland and Warner write in their chapter on ecology, using the ecological frame, “the congregation is analyzed as a unit interacting with other units in society: people, organizations, and cultures.”¹⁴ That community interaction for First Baptist has steadily declined, allowing the Church to shrink into obscurity. Despite recent efforts to rebuild collapsed local and regional relationships, its small size, location, and lack of members who reside in the city have stunted the success rate. One prime example is that although the Church strives to remain visible through service and being active in social justice and unity events, the Milford community primarily knows the Church more for its charitable Clothes Closet mission than for being a church.¹⁵ That may be a testament to the impact of the Clothes Closet mission, but it is also a revelatory mirror that shows the decline of the Church’s significance as a part of the surrounding community.

With the understanding that the Church needed to do more, members came together in 2018 to expand the physical reach of the clothing mission. Instead of those who need clothing traversing to Milford from surrounding towns and cities, the outreach ministry brings the items to the communities in need. As a subsequent benefit of this

after the event of Bloody Sunday, sending clean bottled water to Flint, Michigan, annual support to provide clean water to Uganda, sending clothing and supplies to Puerto Rico after the devastation caused by Hurricane Maria in 2018, support sent to Baton Rouge, LA in 2016 after flooding, and others.

¹³ Nancy T. Ammerman et al., *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 40.

¹⁴ Ammerman, *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*, 40

¹⁵ First Baptist Clothes Closet Provides Clothing for Those in Need,” *Milford Mirror*, last modified May 23, 2016, <https://www.milfordmirror.com/news/community/article/First-Baptist-Clothes-Closet-provides-clothing-13883791.php>.

expansion, the ministry has fostered a relationship not only with the people who are served through the outreach mission but also with the secular and ecumenical organizations with which the ministry works.

During the Coronavirus-2019 Pandemic

The combination of the COVID-19 pandemic and continued racial injustice created new opportunities for community involvement. The pandemic spread throughout the world with an intensity most people never experienced in their lifetimes. In late 2019 into early 2020, there were portentous reports of infection and death throughout Europe and Asia. By March 2020, the United States was irrevocably introduced to a virus that would ultimately claim 385,439 lives by the end of the year, and 429,380 more lives by the end of 2021.¹⁶ Complications due to a stunted supply chain created a frenzy for sanitary supplies that ultimately led to a supply insecurity and hoarding of basic needs such as toilet paper.¹⁷ Stay at home orders were suggested but not enforced, requiring essential workers to continue to put themselves at higher risk of contracting the virus. Schools paused in-person learning and committed to virtual learning. Most churches suspended physical meetings and services for the safety of their members. Many businesses closed permanently while others flailed, along with a myriad of other outcomes that were unimaginable to some Americans just a few months earlier.

As with many organizations, the Church's physical presence in the community declined significantly during the 2020 quarantine period. All the Church's physical

¹⁶ "NVSS - Provisional Death Counts for Covid-19 - Executive Summary," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, April 23, 2021), <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/covid19/mortality-overview.htm>.

¹⁷ Jen Wieczner, "The Case of the Missing Toilet Paper: How the Coronavirus Exposed U.S. Supply Chain Flaws," *Fortune* (May 21, 2020), <https://fortune.com/2020/05/18/toilet-paper-sales-surge-shortage-coronavirus-pandemic-supply-chain-cpg-panic-buying/>.

relationships were in inactive stasis. The outreach ministry tried as long as possible to safely distribute clothing to those in need, but as the infection and death rates continued to rise, the ministry's efforts were eventually suspended. However, with the quarantine, the community became virtual. No longer did the Church only serve the Milford community and the surrounding areas, but through social media, it now served people around the country. With the internet as its sole medium of ministry, the Church's impact developed unlimited reach. The distribution of important information concerning service opportunities, medical updates, voting news, and voting options were shared not only with the membership but also with the new virtual community.

Sadly, while dealing with this dangerously unprecedented situation, the country was made aware of the undeniable presence of violent racism and injustice. As the majority of people in the United States sat in their homes, they were inundated with viral news and videos of Black people being killed by police and neighbors. They watched teargassing and violence from local authorities toward protestors in various cities, including Washington, DC, where the then president, Donald Trump, wanted to clear protestors to take a picture in front of a church. They heard false accusations towards Black people for violence, vandalism, and more. The killings of Breonna Taylor,¹⁸

¹⁸ Breonna Taylor was killed on March 13, 2020, when White officers forced entry into her home fired thirty-two gunshots and six bullets Taylor. Taylor's boyfriend shared that he thought the police were intruders because they did not announce themselves. He fired a warning shot and the police responded by blindly firing and killing Taylor. The police claimed that they entered as part of a drug investigation. They never searched the home for drugs. The police report, primarily left blank, reported that Taylor had no injuries. The officer's trial is scheduled for February 2022.

Ahmad Arbury,¹⁹ and George Floyd²⁰ motivated some of the membership, already exhausted from a lifetime of racial injustice, to come together and form a Social Justice Team. This led to actions such as providing voting information to the growing virtual community, both local and national, opinion columns in the local paper,²¹ and hosting virtual meetings about pending legislation and its potential community impact. Existence in the virtual world also allowed the Church to participate in efforts that were previously impossible due to time and geography. The most significant of which was becoming a member of CONECT (Congregations Organized for a New Connecticut), a multifaith organization committed to fighting for social justice. Its participation in CONECT drew attention from those in the local community who did not physically see us but were aware of the legislative battles concerning social justice.

Although traditional forms of community service were suspended, the social climate of 2020 and 2021 provided new involvement opportunities. As the only Black church in the city, First Baptist was represented at a prayer vigil for those killed by

¹⁹ Ahmaud Arbery was murdered on February 23, 2020, while jogging through Satilla Shores, GA. Three white men pursued him. One initiated the pursuit, one shot him, and the third recorded the murder on his phone. The District Attorney advised the police department to make no arrest. After the video was made public, the three men were arrested 74 days after the murder. All three men were found guilty of various levels of murder, assault, and other crimes.

²⁰ George Floyd was murdered on May 25, 2020. While handcuffed and laid prone, Minnesota police officer, Derek Chauvin knelt on Floyd's neck for over nine minutes. During the account, which was recorded and made public, although Floyd complained about not being able to breathe, showed distress, and ultimately laid lifeless under Chauvin's knee, Chauvin continued to ignore onlookers request to let Floyd up. Floyd was arrested under suspicion of using a counterfeit \$20 bill. Chauvin was found guilty of murder and manslaughter.

²¹ Hough, Horace, and Edgar Russell. "Letter to the Editor: Talk of a 'Rigged' Election Helps No One." New Haven Register. Connecticut Post, October 1, 2020.
<https://www.nhregister.com/opinion/article/Letter-to-the-editor-Talk-of-a-rigged-15609427.php>.

police,²² Black Lives Matter protests, Juneteenth celebrations, and even an article²³ was written in the local newspaper about the history of Black soldiers memorialized on the church property. Before the COVID-19 vaccine, with infection rates still rising, First Baptist, in conjunction with a local health center, hosted walk-up testing on Church grounds. While recognition was not the intent behind the church's service, the visibility of the work began to lay relational foundations with my target demographic. Ironically, throughout the pandemic, although the Church's physical community involvement was occluded, its impact and recognition for service increased. This new recognition inspired many of our long-time, new, and professional members and visitors to share news of the church's efforts with their peers.

Pastoral Influence Leading to Augmented Culture

Although a high pastor turnover rate has negative effects on any congregation, First Baptist has used their pastoral turnover experience to develop a self-sustaining operational culture through relying on its laity. Born from the necessity of operating during pastoral vacancy, the membership has become comfortable conducting its own business, participating in laity-led prayer groups and Bible study, and continuing to find ways to minister to the membership and surrounding community. Over the years, it seems that their efficaciousness of lay leadership stems from their unconscious understanding of the four aspects of ministry listed by Zeni Fox in *New Ecclesial Ministry, Lay Professionals Serving The Church*. Although this book is written for preparing laity for

²² Bill Bloxsom, "Milford Clergy Lie Silent on Ground to Note Last Minutes of George Floyd's Life," *New Haven Register*, Last modified June 5, 2020. <https://www.nhregister.com/news/article/Milford-clergy-lay-silent-on-ground-to-note-last-15318312.php>

²³ Bill Bloxsom, "Milford Native Digs into City's Revolutionary Past," *New Haven Register* (Milford Mirror, March 2, 2021), <https://www.nhregister.com/news/article/Milford-native-digs-into-city-s-revolutionary-15990238.php>.

Catholic ministry, Fox itemizes qualities every healthy ministry should have. She writes, “One: ministry belongs to the whole Church, not a particular group...Two: ministry is diakonia, service of the people, service of the local community...Three: ministry is collegial...Four...the horizon of ministry is the Kingdom. The Church does not exist for herself.”²⁴ The majority of First Baptist’s members who have committed to the Church’s growth understand that ministry is about more than a person but about the mission. They have a strong understanding of commitment, participation, and decision-making. This allows people who desire to be involved or are familiar with being involved in group-led organizations (other non-profits, unions, volunteer organizations, social organizations, etc.) to easily insert themselves into the operations of the Church alongside others who understand the tasks. In my experience, the congregation mainly looks to the Pastor for visionary spiritual and organizational leadership, spiritual authority, and a prophetic voice. The fulfillment of those desires in conjunction with the pastor’s natural inherent traits (gender, age, introvert or extrovert, single or married, family or no family, education level, etc.) allows the Pastor’s influence to have the potential to permeate to the core of Church culture. Therefore, it is important to discuss my execution of the pastoral role as part of this setting.

As discussed earlier, along with fulfilling the expectations of the role as specified by the Church, the Pastor’s unique perspective, experience, skills, strengths, and weaknesses contribute to the institution’s culture and identity. As I aim to attract, develop relationships with, and involve Black professionals with families, we must recognize that my pastoral influence over five years and the culture born from my integration into the

²⁴ Zeni Fox, *New Ecclesial Ministry: Lay Professionals Serving the Church* (Franklin, WI: Sheed & Ward, 2002), 342–3.

preexisting Church culture continue to alter one's experience at First Baptist. To determine whether this acculturation changed things for better or worse would be a subjective assessment. However, as a member of the demographic that this project aims to attract, I can objectively state that during my time as Pastor, the culture has organically become more modern and less traditional in its transparency of operations, more conscious of time and required commitment, more modern in its financial appeals methods, used a less esoteric lexicon, and other subtle adjustments.

Like all Pastors, my age, education, style of leadership, and work experience also affect the culture. This is not only because of my sermons and teaching but also through the conscious, and often unconscious, community kinship people feel with the Pastor. Generationally, some see me as a son, nephew, or grandson. Some see me as a father or uncle. However, for the sake of this project, the community kinship that has the most cultural impact are the collegial ones. The Church now has a budding group of professional members who identify me similarly to their co-workers, friends, colleagues, and classmates. Many of them correctly recognize in me the shared experience, preferences, benefits, and struggles of the Black Christian professional.

If we use “white collar” job experience as a marker for the word “professional,” and count elementary through high school teaching as a “white collar job,” I, like many other Black professionals, am a second-generation professional following my maternal line and third-generation following my paternal line. If a generation lasts approximately fifteen to twenty years²⁵ and slavery was abolished in 1865—recognizing that some

²⁵ “The Whys and Hows of Generations Research,” Pew Research Center - U.S. Politics & Policy (Pew Research Center, July 28, 2020), <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2015/09/03/the-whys-and-hows-of-generations-research/>.

slaves were not freed immediately—that allows an estimated ten generations of Black people born in the United States since slavery. When we consider the two decades it takes to become a viable wage earner, the limitations of limited educational opportunities, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, and individual and systemic racism, it is safe to conclude that the majority of Black people in this country do not have a professional legacy that extends more than six or seven generations. As an example, in my family, my great-great-grandparents were slaves. Therefore, along with the fulfillment that comes from social and professional success, I am also all too aware that for many Black people, I inhabit socio-economic rarified air.

I was raised by my parents who, like so many, migrated to New York from the Carolinas. Both eventually finding employment with the U.S. Postal service, my father retired as a Station Manager and my mother retired as a Plant Supervisor of Mail Processing. Born and raised in Queens, NY, I was blessed to attend the Allen Christian School, a primarily Black private Christian school run by what was known at the time as Allen African Methodist Episcopal Church, now known as Greater Allen Cathedral. My time there academically and culturally equipped me while introducing me to adults and peers who were, and would eventually become, part of the Black professional class. My family attended New Covenant Church of Christ (Baptist), whose congregational demographics reflected that of my parents. I also attended a primarily white, private, all-boys Catholic high school, ten miles away from home (a ninety-minute trip on public transportation each way), which aided my ability to function in culturally unfamiliar environments. However, my parents would lament that my private education did not

shield me from New York's urban violence, death, crime, the sound of gun shots at night, or even empty "red top" crack vials in our driveway.

After high school graduation, I attended Hofstra University in Hempstead, NY. Upon completion, I moved and began my employment search, which due to familial connections placed me as a physical therapy aid. I eventually became a Vice Principal/Dean of Students at a private, Christian, all-boys middle school in Danbury, CT. While there, I continued my education at Fordham University in The Bronx. I am also an "80's baby," which means that I grew up in the spatial and temporal epicenter of hip-hop culture. The culture of New York youth was hip-hop culture, as they were its creators, gatekeepers, and editors.

I proudly embody all of my listed and unlisted experiences. Yet, I understand that my older brothers, who were twelve and fourteen years my senior, did not have my experience. I quickly learned that many of my cousins, due to any number of factors, could not completely relate with my experience either. None of that affected my feelings of community, love, and relationship. I never felt any distance from my people or from the things that are culturally significant to us. I am them. However, I learned that my experiences were more niche when compared to others in my larger community.

I share these markers not as points of pride or privileged braggadocio, for I do not come from "pedigree" when compared to some others. I share these markers for their implications and as points of commonality with my demographic. I communicate (speech, body language, knowledge) in a cultural language that identifies me as someone who has life markers that provide a foundational commonality with many Black Christian

professionals. This identification and recognition has drawn several Black professional visitors to First Baptist during my tenure as pastor.

Worship and Theology

The Church is unabashed about worshiping in the Black Church tradition. Due to the various potential styles that description may reference, the following is a list of some of the notable traits that some identify with traditional Black Church: call to worship, scripture reading, intercessory/pastoral prayer, charismatic music ministry including a choir, congregational hymns, singing of “Lift Every Voice and Sing” during the month of February, prominent recognition of Black History Month and Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Watch Night service, traditional Black Christian lexicon, call and response during the sermon, and singing “Take Me to the Water” during Baptism. Granted, some of these practices do not uniquely belong to the Black Church, but their merger in worship with Black cultural behaviors create a unique Black Church experience. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. addresses this in *The Black Church* when he writes, “Call-and-response exchanges between congregation and pastor; at its best, the seamless interplay between rhythms of the sermon and the harmonies of song, both reflecting the pastor’s biblical exegesis of “the text for today”; modes of prayer, both formal and informal; and possession by the omnipresent Holy Spirit; all are really links in a chain of cultural continuity that connects Africa to Black America.”²⁶ He goes on to write, “They are echoes of sermonic and musical formations of the past fashioned by our ancestors over successive generations of creation, repetition, revision, and, most importantly, improvisation, quite probably since

²⁶ Henry Louis Gates, *Black Church: This Is Our Story, This Is Our Song* (New York: Penguin Books, 2021), 2.

the first hundred years of American slavery.”²⁷ Although First Baptist is not the most overtly Afrocentric church among the surrounding communities, traits such as the ones Gates listed anchor our worship experience. There is no mistaking its Black identity. From songs, sermons, congregants’ attire, and even Black history dinners, the church anchors itself in a socio-spiritual identity. First Baptist worships in the Black tradition, embraces Black communal practices, aims to provide for the needs of the membership and local community, and interprets the Bible through a hermeneutic that allows for embracing Black culture rather than opposing it.

That socio-spiritual identity is the underpinning for the Church motto and theme adopted upon my installation as Pastor, “come to not only have church, but be the church.” From fighting for justice, to providing for the unserved, or simply sending necessary goods to local communities and the African diaspora, the Church abides by what James Cone says should be the “...central theme of Black liberation theology that ought to define the identity of all black churches.”²⁸ In *My Soul Looks Back*, recounting his path away from his denomination-centric desire for ministry, Cone explains, “The issue then was not whether a denomination was AME, AME Zion, Baptist, Methodist, Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, or a host of other names Black Churches used to describe their Christian identity. Rather, the issue was whether a denomination was a community of believers called into being by God in order to participate in the divine work to set the captives free.”²⁹ Through the years, First Baptist has continually strived to live what Cone penned. Whether the Church has many members or few, they have always

²⁷ Gates, *Black Church: This Is Our Story, This Is Our Song*, 2–3.

²⁸ James H. Cone, *My Soul Looks Back* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 66.

²⁹ Cone, *My Soul Looks Back*, 66.

understood that if First Baptist were to remain an effective church, then the spiritual community we call the church and the socio-cultural community we call Black must meet at the place of liberating service and love. It is this relevant quality that anchors First Baptist's identity. It attracts those who are looking for a church that not only worships in the Black Church tradition, but also provides community, love, and does relevant work for those in need.

Internet Presence

Pre-Coronavirus-19 Pandemic

First Baptist has a publicity ministry which when originally developed, focused primarily on print media. Over the years, as print dwindled in popularity, the Church created a website. The publicity ministry increased communication with online publications, set up eblasts to distribute community emails to the Church membership, and created Facebook and Twitter pages. At one point, the website was the major online hub for the Church calendar, public information, and member-only documents (with password access only). As time passed, website use decreased among the members but visitors still used it to learn more about the Church. Immediately before the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2020 quarantine, First Baptist's primary online activity consisted of eblasts informing congregants about deaths in the membership and sending out occasional Church announcements. Although the website was updated two years before, it only remained active as a placeholder and for search engine optimization. The primary public communication medium became the Facebook page. This consisted of occasional posts, predominantly comprised of pictures and a weekly reference to something from a sermon. Occasionally, there may have been a post referencing a national holiday,

important birthday, or anniversary. There were approximately 250 likes and followers during that time. The Twitter page was never used.

During Coronavirus-19 Pandemic

During the first week of the 2020 quarantine, the church established various online giving methods and began discussion of updating the website to something more contemporary. Within a month, the website was updated. Although it did not contain all the pictures and information on the last website, it centered the Facebook feed. Social media activity increased exponentially. With the Facebook page becoming the church's sole way to communicate with the public, multiple posts a week, professionally designed graphics, and access to sermons grew engagement to almost 600 likes and 800 followers. The Church began using Vimeo and YouTube to watch videos from the Pastor, hear announcements about the membership, get updates about the Church, and be encouraged by the virtual music ministry. Zoom virtual meeting software was utilized for all meetings, Bible Studies, and workshops.

Eblast activity also increased significantly. Email became the sole way to communicate with the Church's membership. What was an eblast rate of one email every couple of weeks transformed into two to three ebasts weekly. What was one email list consisting of members, became two lists (one for membership and one for members and visitors). What were emails about membership concerns became emails about jobs, meeting updates, community activities, and personalized videos for the Church. These adjustments will be explored in more depth in the next chapter. The Church's quick and relevant response to the quarantine allowed it to make a decent public impression while many other area churches were still trying to figure out their next steps. Through social

media, link sharing, and word of mouth, this new online presence not only introduced First Baptist to new people, but it also created the opportunity for people who liked the Church but could not attend regularly to increase their engagement. As my target demographic often fits into the latter category, the Church's online presence proved to be an anchoring medium and tool for this project.

Sustainability Challenges and Strategic Goal

I have had the privilege of serving as Pastor since July 2016. When I initially served as interim Pastor one year before, I was impressed by the congregation's commitment to service and love of Christ. Sadly, I was also aware that there was no strategic plan to ensure that the Church would be sustained in the future. Since I accepted the role of Senior Pastor, I have found that although there has been steady growth in membership and interest, the Church has not been able to regularly attract members who have the skills and resources to help it grow sustainably. For First Baptist, that demographic is Black professionals between thirty-five and fifty years old.

Unlike many other Black American churches its size in the area, First Baptist congregation's socioeconomic standing, pool of people with management-level skills, familiar traditional church aesthetic, small community, and earnest disarming kindness place it in a great position to attract a demographic of thirty-five to fifty year-old Black professionals with families. The addition of a steady online presence, contemporized operations, and functional public communication further buttresses its potential. As part of the targeted demographic, I believe that First Baptist is ideally suited to succeed in this venture. Apropos of its attraction, as a professional in my 40s, I recognize my desire to be a part of a community that is familial socially, spiritually, and culturally.

The congregation's socioeconomic standing reduces the chance that they would be impressed or show awkward favoritism to visitors with middle to upper-class incomes. The pool of congregants with management-level skills and experience allows cultural familiarity for professional class visitors. These professional commonalities range from being one of the few in a family who have achieved a certain level of success to experiencing unique forms of racism due to socioeconomic standing. As Marvin A. McMickle writes in *Preaching to the Black Middle Class*, "People in the black middle class encounter racism in ways that are often unique to their economic, educational, and employment status. They often find themselves in places where the black underclass would never be present."³⁰ First Baptist's traditional aesthetic, potentially abhorrent to younger millennials and Gen Z, can be comforting and nostalgic for many thirty-five to fifty year olds who attended churches of similar appearance with their parents, grandparents, or elders. The small community and disarming kindness are welcoming to those professionals who desire a genuine, safe, and culturally relevant community. This relevance is important for a demographic who grew up reading Ntozake Shange's *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf* or Richard Wright's *Black Boy*, and now read Ta-Nehesi Coates *Between the World and Me*, Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*, Mehrsa Baradaran's *The Color of Money: Black Banks and The Racial Wealth Gap*, or Richard Rothstein's *The Color of Law* in adulthood. There are many who would embrace a place that provides the cultural familiarity of the past, blended with the awareness and knowledge gained through experience and education.

³⁰ Marvin Andrew McMickle, *Preaching to the Black Middle Class: Words of Challenge, Words of Hope* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2000), 27.

Additionally, due to the pandemic and social injustice, this need for cultural relevance increased in pertinence throughout 2020 and 2021. As Dara Mathis writes in her article for *The Atlantic*, “The Church’s Black Exodus,”

But some are nursing another intimate wound: their church’s failure to acknowledge their pain. Many Black parishioners, especially those at multiracial institutions, bristle when they hear rhetoric from church leaders that ignores how health inequities and racism are affecting the Black community right now. Others are hurt by their church’s conspicuous silence on these issues. The result is a quiet but resolute contingent of Black church members leaving their congregation to seek spiritual healing elsewhere.³¹

For some Black Christian professionals, the sufficiency they once found in predominantly White and multicultural churches abated and became anathematic over the last few years. Some of these spiritual communities that aim to efficiently minister to all cultures, which often avoid taking public stances in support of their Black congregants, have wounded many of their Black members with their silence, ignorance, and support of problematic people and policies. Some of these communities’ leaders, which under the guise of harmony, aggressively avoid boldness like that of Jeremiah Wright, Pastor Emeritus of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago in his caustic condemnation of America. He proclaimed in a 2003 sermon:

The government gives them the drugs, builds bigger prisons, passes a three-strike law, and then wants us to sing “God Bless America.” No, no, no. Not “God Bless America”; God Damn America! That’s in the Bible, for killing innocent people. God Damn America for treating her citizens as less than human. God Damn America as long as she keeps trying to act like she is God and she is supreme!³²

³¹ Dara T. Mathis, “The Church’s Black Exodus,” *The Atlantic* (October 11, 2020), <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2020/10/why-black-parishioners-are-leaving-churches/616588>.

³² BlackPast, “Rev. Jeremiah Wright, “Confusing God and Government,” December 9, 2020, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/2008-rev-jeremiah-wright-confusing-god-and-government/>.

It is true that every preacher cannot as effectively harangue this country for its dismissiveness of select lives, but some churches' silent avoidance or perpetuation of the sermonic status quo has created a spiritual and emotional void that many Black people are searching to fill. With their exodus from these churches over recent years, many of these same communities' leaders who thought silence created a worship environment desired by all, have found that many of their Black congregants aligned more with Wright than they could have imagined.

Although potentially jarring to many who witnessed the boom of the multicultural church model over the past few decades, it seemed like an inevitable eventuality to a generation that was growing weary of a church experience that required them to trade their concern about their sociocultural experiences in exchange for Jesus. In her book *Womanist Sass and Talk Back*, Mitzi Smith explains this social-for-sacred exchange when she writes, "When members of minoritized oppressed communities are asked and expected to treat social (in)justice issues that impact their daily lives as a postscript to authentic biblical interpretation, their voices are silenced and marginalized and are often unwittingly taught to accept the imposed silence as a sacred obligation and sacrifice that God requires."³³ To expect people to permanently silence their struggle in exchange for spirituality lacks empathy, ignores their pain, and is ultimately unwelcoming. First Baptist's size, cultural identity and awareness, familial-based interaction, and socioeconomic standing allow it to provide a safe space for those looking to heal their socio-spiritual bifurcation.

³³ Mitzi J. Smith, *Womanist Sass and Talk Back* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2018), 2.

The growth of thirty-five to fifty year old Black professionals would offer the Church an opportunity, not only to progress operationally but to also minister to a demographic that many Churches have not genuinely served. Yes, this genus of congregant brings skills, finances, and stability. However, they must be ministered to and loved. For the sake of explaining this project, I primarily addressed the operational need. Yet, what I feel is most important is the ability to serve. I believe the Church's attractiveness, ability to develop relationships, and involve Black Christian professionals will stem from its ability to genuinely love, relate, and attend to the demographic's needs. With love at the lead, the questions that Joshua Mitchell poses to the Church from the perspective of suspicious millennials should dissipate. Mitchell pens in *Black Millennials and the Church*, "Are you seeking to love me to life and direct me toward a transformative relationship with Jesus Christ and community, or am I simply another number to add to your church's roll who you hope will also help keep your church from slipping into foreclosure?"³⁴ Black professionals, especially those who occupy the economic middle and upper-class, are familiar with the charitable "ask." They tend to be alert and at times suspicious of people's displays of kindness. To aim to sincerely attract, develop relationships with, and involve this demographic, being loving and forthcoming with intentions are prerequisites. With First Baptist already known for those traits, this project is anchored on a solid foundation for relationship building.

To be clear, this project is not an attempt to embrace classism or practice hierarchy in the church. First Baptist will continue to serve all and carry out the message of Jesus Christ. This project is an attempt to stabilize the much-too-often inconsistent

³⁴ Joshua Mitchell, *Black Millennials & the Church: Meet Me Where I Am* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2018), 48.

organizational operations that have led to the demise of many other churches and expand ministerial effort and reach. I believe that this project will better equip First Baptist to continue its historic tradition with more life and fervor.

CHAPTER TWO PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

Like many others, I have had the awkward experience of worshipping at a small church, feeling revived by the music, inspired by the message, maybe even encouraged by the fellowship, but still feeling a separation between me and the other congregants. This chasm is neither carved from a lack of love, desire, or passion to carry out the message of Christ, nor is it rooted in elitist views of superiority or inferiority. Sheryll Cashin in *The Failures of Integration* paints a great picture of this relationship. She writes, “Those Black professionals, like myself, who grew up with friends from the projects, as well as the sons and daughters of doctors, lawyers, and entrepreneurs, exercise a great deal of dexterity when moving between the three rungs of Black America.”³⁵ She continues:

We like the familiarity of a Black barber or beauty shop and a rocking Black church, places where the Black classes tend to intersect and share a common culture. It seems as if Black people of all ages and classes can do the Electric Slide, the Booty Call, or the cha-cha step. These are the common threads of blackness we hold on to and hold dear. But there is a distinct schism among us.³⁶

This schism that interferes with a full communal connection, many times stems from socio-economic, socio-cultural, and educational differences. Sadly, as people, it can be difficult to connect with others who do not speak our socio-cultural language. However, one of the unique social qualities of First Baptist is that despite its small size and

³⁵ Sheryll Cashin, *The Failures of Integration: How Race and Class Are Undermining the American Dream* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 254.

³⁶ Cashin, *The Failures of Integration*, 254.

traditional appearance, the congregants' humble beginnings, combined with their socio-economic successes, created a loving and understanding membership that is welcoming to all.

First Baptist Church exudes sincere kindness, love, and a commitment to service more than any other church where I have served. However, like many other houses of worship, much of our congregation is transitioning either in life or location. Many of the transitioning members are those who anchored the membership and always made sure that the Church received whatever it needed. Those generations of skilled and committed “builders” and “boomers” have been the backbone of the Church. Whether that meant that a Deacon built the risers for the choir loft or the men constructed walls in the fellowship hall to create office space and classrooms. It is evidenced by a woman who stitched the curtains that would be used in the sanctuary and members providing thousands of dollars to make sure that the bills were paid. Subsequently, with their increasing absence or inability to serve, the Church not only lacks financial support, but it also lacks people with the knowledge, skills, and commitment to develop a secure foundation and plan for the future.

Making the situation more problematic is that the church also lacks sufficient numbers of committed Generation X and Millennials to take over the vacancies left by transitioning members. The issues created by this increasingly imbalanced exchange of generations, unexpectedly mutated with the introduction of the COVID-19 pandemic. The staggering number of deaths, social complications, limitations, and fear that arose during the pandemic accelerated the diminishing presence of senior generations. However, proven by chat comments and likes, the Church's online worship presence

allowed more Generation X and Millennials to engage our service. Although this was a beneficial consequence of the church being forced into the virtual space, the challenge of transitioning Generation Xers and Millennials from online viewers to “anchoring members” continues to prove a daunting task. Nevertheless, this project does not focus on how to transform online viewers into anchoring ones, but it does aim to increase the amount of thirty-five to fifty year old professionals with families who may one day become committed to the Church.

Analysis of Setting

The current congregation, although aging, includes a strong amount of college-educated, retired professionals. In July of 2015, the results of a congregational self-study revealed that out of the forty-nine adults who participated, ten had “some college, trade, or vocational school,” seven said they had a “college degree,” and twenty-three identified that they had “postgraduate work or degree.”³⁷ Although the participants were few, these forty-nine represent the general demographics of our anchoring membership. With high-level school administrators, social workers, entrepreneurs, administrative workers, accountants, attorneys, etc., many visiting professionals do not feel the same socio-cultural tension discussed in this chapter’s introduction. However, there are factors that buttress the challenges previously listed. With an active membership of 178 people, an unassuming and architecturally dated building, its position hidden from the road, its lack of parking that fits only twelve to fifteen cars, its location in the seldom visited historic district of Milford, and Milford’s primarily White community, successfully attracting

³⁷ Appendix G.

Black professionals between the ages of thirty-five and fifty years old with families becomes even more difficult.

I believe creating a model to attract, develop relationships with, and involve this demographic would resolve several Church burdens. These include a dwindling presence of skilled members, lack of financial stability, and ever-shrinking generation of young children present in the Church. Although it is common knowledge that many professionals relocate often during the early years of their career, many of the professional families who were attracted to First Baptist have shared that they want to stay settled during their children's school years.³⁸ In contrast, due to the limited professional opportunities in the Milford, Connecticut area, younger adults have been more inclined to nomadic behavior as they establish themselves financially and professionally. A successful model would not only address the issue of retention but it would also create some stability of our financial and skill resources. My target demographic's combination of maturing age and employment equips them to be more financially stable and able to contribute to the Church. In contrast, younger adults may still be struggling to find financial security. Professionals also have skills that they have acquired through education or experience that can be utilized for operations and ministry. Thirdly, I intentionally use "with families" as a descriptor because it implies children. The ability to bring in Black professionals with children would help us to develop a generation that will be raised in the Church community.

Physical Location and Access

³⁸ Appendix B.

I do not believe that location inhibits First Baptist from accomplishing this task, but it is considered in my methodology. Along with the aforementioned issue of transportation and parking, the city's demographics also provide a challenge. *Connecticut Town Profiles'* 2019 data shows that Milford has a population of approximately 51,000 people.³⁹ With 1,553 Black/non-Hispanic residents, the Black population sits at a trivial 3.04 percent. Although this is better than the 2.6 percent in 2018, it remains an obstacle when aiming to grow the Church while embracing our cultural heritage. To grow the Black professional demographic at a Church that worships in the Black American cultural tradition is challenging when the community has such a small percentage of Black people. This is exacerbated by the fact that the side of the city where the Church is located is not the side where the majority of those Black people frequent.

In comparison, according to DataHaven, in surrounding towns like Stratford, Black/non-Hispanics make up 15 percent of the population. To the north, New Haven, boasts 31 percent.⁴⁰ Favorably, for us, people are now willing to travel for church and our target demographic in the surrounding towns generally have the means to do so. As one professional observed upon hearing about my project: "the thirty-five to fifty demographic is a mobile demographic with choices as to where to congregate..." This has created slow but consistent growth and visitation rates as word of mouth continues to let people know about the "Black Church in Milford." With the pandemic-induced transition to online ministry, it is unknown whether the demographic's willingness to travel will remain a benefit. There are professionals who, after being exposed to the

³⁹ Connecticut Data Collaborative, *Milford, Connecticut: CERC Town Profile 2019*, January 16, 2019, <https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/cerc-pdfs/2019/milford-2019.pdf>.

⁴⁰ Mark Abraham et al., *Greater New Haven Community Index 2019*, DataHaven, 2019, https://www.ctdatahaven.org/sites/ctdatahaven/files/DataHaven_GNH_Community_Index_2019.pdf.

church's online worship, have shared with others that they would like to attend upon its reopening. However, the opportunity has not presented itself. At the time of this project, First Baptist has not reentered the sanctuary for regular worship.

Virtual Location and Access (During the COVID-19 Pandemic)

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, if traveling to Church was not ideal or there were scheduling conflicts, Christian professionals' familiarity with technology inclined them toward a willingness to attend a church online. It is commonly understood that those identified as Millennials were born into a world of computers, devices, and technology. However, those identified as Generation Xers are also very comfortable with technology as they are digital natives. In a study about Generation X, The Michigan State University School of Journalism writes that "Gen Xers express as much confidence as Millennials in their use of technology."⁴¹ With this understanding, when the pandemic began in March 2020, First Baptist intentionally aimed to become one of the virtual locations that local Black professionals would visit online.

Online, the church can be reached by anyone with internet service. It has none of the challenging limitations of our physical campus. Everyone can attend in real time or at the time of their choosing. With announcement slides during service and eblast announcements during the week, everyone can hear about what is being done in the community and the Church. This allowed visiting professionals, congregants, and members to invite their friends or share a service, all at the click of a button.

The effort to provide progressive and contemporary interaction online is part of what has been branded the "virtual campus." Here, the Church engages without concern

⁴¹ Joe Grimm, ed., *100 Questions and Answers about Gen X: Forged by Economics, Technology, Pop Culture and Work* (Canton, MI: Front Edge Publishing, 2019), 16.

for neighborhood demographics or transportation options. “Progressive measures” is intended to denote contemporary virtual methods such as videos, video conference software for closed events, and social media. There are some who consider a church as too technologically advanced, an alienation of its backbone, the older membership. In many ways this can be true. However, a church being technologically too far behind other businesses and organizations with which people engage can alienate those who have grown accustomed to or are natives of modern technology. For example, publicly offering CDs to members who only use streaming services and downloads,⁴² offering only hard copies of documents rather than digital, asking people who usually pay bills online to write checks or use cash, or only offering conference calls when people must see what is being discussed, can all communicate to many professionals that they may not be compatible with a church’s operating system. Therefore, it is important to let my target demographic know that the Church’s methods of meeting and worshipping are not only spiritually and socially relevant but are also appropriately contemporary.

As a note, the Church has not and will not abandon its older membership. When the transition to virtual media started, efforts were made to train members how to dial into our current video conference software. If they could not be trained or did not have the resources, then it was an opportunity for the Church or congregants to provide those means or aid them through the process. However, when necessary, although not made known to the public, regular mailings, phone conferences, and phone-trees are still provided when necessary.

Generational Designations and Identifiers

⁴² Grimm, *100 Questions and Answers about Gen X*, 11.

Regarding the generational labels of thirty-five to fifty year olds, I am careful not to commit to terms such as “Generation X,” “xennial,” or “Millennial” for three reasons. Firstly, there are inconsistencies in the categorization of ages. Some sources state that Generation X includes those born between 1965 to 1982.⁴³ Another references those born between 1965 to 1979.⁴⁴ And yet another lists 1980 as the end date.⁴⁵ Secondly, the issue of attracting Black American professionals is one that may spread beyond this decade. In turn, this project may prove to be helpful for yet-to-be-named generations. Thirdly, as a person who falls within the “gray area” of birth years 1979 to 1982, I have found that generational traits are less decided by a person’s birth year and more determined by the generational culture in which they were raised. For instance, as the youngest of three brothers whose oldest brother is 14 years my senior, I was raised in a household with older parents and older siblings and introduced to music, television, and values, older than me. Therefore, I consider myself Generation X. In contrast, someone my age who is the oldest of three and born to young parents may consider themselves a Millennial. Still, this potential fluidity does not negate the value of the research done on attracting these generations, especially when looking at the desires and expectations of each grouping.

Regardless of a persons’ physical age, their “generational age” determines much about how to draw or repel them. Tim Elmore, an expert on leading and relating to people from varying generations, lists some of the qualities of Generation X and Millennials. He identifies Generation X, usually born between 1965 and 1982, the “keep it real”

⁴³ Guadal, Jhonson, and Hunt, “Defining Characteristics & Values of the Past 5 Generations,” Growing Leaders, June 13, 2017, <https://growingleaders.com/blog/last-five-generations-changed-us>.

⁴⁴ “Boomers, Gen X, Gen Y, and Gen Z Explained,” *Kasasa*, last modified October 20, 2020, <https://www.kasasa.com/articles/generations/gen-x-gen-y-gen-z>.

⁴⁵ Michael Dimock, “Defining Generations: Where Millennials end and Generation Z Begins,” *Pew Research Center*, January 17, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-Millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/>.

generation. As they entered adulthood, their experiences of Vietnam, Watergate, Gas lines, etc., significantly influenced their values. To effectively relate to Gen Xers, Elmore says, “I think it’s realism, I think it’s authenticity, remember ‘keep it real’ was their narrative. Resourcefulness.”⁴⁶ He identifies their professional status by highlighting, “they are often in management by this point.”⁴⁷ They want “freedom to work on my own terms. Don’t babysit me. Don’t micromanage me.”⁴⁸ They also have a concern for equality and fair treatment. Regarding Generation Xers, “Sixty-five percent of Gen Xers agreed that same-sex marriage should be legal. Sixty-two percent said the country should do more to ensure that Blacks have the same rights as Whites and 66 percent said immigration strengthens the country.”⁴⁹

It is important to add regarding Black Generation Xers that many of the struggles that they faced were magnified due to the social-economic burdens of much of the Black community. The crack epidemic, “Reaganomics,” the community-fracturing “war on drugs,” the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, John F. Kennedy, Fred Hampton, and others all reinforced Generation X’s skepticism. This is evidenced by one of the most popular offspring of the generation, Hip-Hop. The development of this culture, with its defiantly expressive art, poetry, music, and dance birthed from pain, the absence of resources, and the need for expression, possibly best reflects the world of the Black Generation Xer.

⁴⁶ Andy Stanley and Tim Elmore, “April 2019: Generational Diversity in the Workplace, Part 1,” Andy Stanley Leadership Podcast, December 4, 2019, <https://andystanley.com/podcast/generational-diversity-in-the-workplace/>.

⁴⁷ Stanley, “Generational Diversity in the Workplace, Part 1.”

⁴⁸ Stanley, “Generational Diversity in the Workplace, Part 1.”

⁴⁹ Grimm, *100 Questions and Answers about Gen X*, 11.

Elmore says about the Millennial, which he says is usually born between 1983 and 2000, that they are about “Confidence. They’re tech savvy. They’re very optimistic. They often think they can change the world by noon on Friday, you know that sort of thing. And they are very aware of their influence.”⁵⁰ To relate to and communicate with them, it must be “meaningful work serving people. They want to feel like their work matters.”⁵¹ Like Generation Xers, Millennials also are concerned about equality. Michigan State found that “equal access to opportunities for all” was the top thing that was missing from society that would make Millennials feel “more free.”⁵² It also documented, “about two-thirds of U.S. Millennials said their top concern was income inequality and discrimination.”⁵³

Once more, it is important to acknowledge the uniqueness of Black Millennials. Again, due to socio-economic challenges, although they have more optimism than their predecessors, it may not be much more. A lack of resources, gun-violence, filmed police brutality such as the Rodney King beating and subsequent riots, the death of Tupac Shakur, Christopher Wallace (The Notorious B.I.G.), and more in many cases tempers the optimism Elmore references. Joshua Mitchell writes about the important life markers of the Black Millennial. He references the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the election and reelection of the first Black president, Barak Obama, and the devastating shooting death of Trayvon Martin.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Stanley, “Generational Diversity in the Workplace, Part 1.”

⁵¹ Stanley, “Generational Diversity in the Workplace, Part 1.”

⁵² Grimm, *100 Questions and Answers about Millennials*, 29.

⁵³ Grimm, *100 Questions and Answers about Millennials*, 29.

⁵⁴ Mitchell, *Black Millennials & the Church*, 20, 21.

I will further elaborate on the importance of the generational desires and affronts in chapter four. However, the value of the information provided above, as well as the information that will be examined later, is vital to attracting, building relationships, and involving my target demographic. Although a person's birth year does not solidify them into one generational mindset or the other, we see that the people in my Black thirty-five to fifty year old target have many cross-generational preferences that reflect much of what was documented above. The generational information that Elmore, Mitchell, and Black Millennial and faith expert, Brianna Parker, provide makes it is clear that if you want to attract my target demographic, sincerity, relevance, a socially healthy church community, technological competency, and boldness when confronted with injustice are prerequisites.

Larger Ministry Context

Beyond the local setting of my project, the challenge that I am addressing is not unique to Milford, Connecticut. Attention is often given to the dwindling presence of Millennials or Generation Zers. Although these are valid concerns, churches are also losing young professionals and their families. Based on the Pew Research Center's surveys conducted in 2007 and 2014, Generation Xers did not significantly change their frequency of church attendance, in the number who believe in God, or in their religious practices.⁵⁵ However, older Black Millennials showed a 2 percent increase in their belief in God but a 14 percent decline in church attendance.⁵⁶ There is no specificity provided to clarify what ages are included in that 14 percent decline, but Pew Research specifies that

⁵⁵ "Religion in America: U.S. Religious Data, Demographics and Statistics," Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project, September 9, 2020, <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/older-millennial/religious-tradition/historically-black-protestant/>.

⁵⁶ "Religion in America: U.S. Religious Data, Demographics and Statistics."

of the older Millennials who identify as Black Protestants, 44 percent are between thirty and forty-nine years old. It is safe to assume that my target demographic comprises some of that 14 percent decline. Therefore, many other churches share the same troublesome trend and potential future that First Baptist faces. As mentioned, without young professionals and their families, the church loses contributions from people with active skillsets, generational growth that comes from raising children in church, and a generation of qualified organizational leaders to replace the “Builders” and “Boomers” that will transition.

Yet, it is clear that this problem has existed for some time. In 2000, Marvin McMickle attributed some of this decline to the Black middle-class’s commitments to other societies and organizations. He writes:

One of the most interesting and disturbing aspects of ministry in black middle-class churches is how many purely social activities and organizations there are that seem to be equally, if not more, important than any of the activities taking place at or sponsored by the church.” He goes on to say, “It has never ceased to amaze me that members of the black middle class invest as much time and money as they do in these social circles. It often seems to border on devotion.”⁵⁷

McMickle informs us that the church is not winning the competition of being the most important commitment in Black life. Today, it seems the problem has expanded. Not only are there other organizations vying for attention, but as my project highlights, there are also professionals who either have no trust in the Church’s relevance, are dismayed by the overt hate found in our Churches, or may simply have no interest in organized religion. I not only aspire for this project to accomplish its goals but to also provide some

⁵⁷ McMickle, *Preaching to the Black Middle Class*, 79.

insight that may be helpful in the Church building a healthy relationship with Black professionals.

Potential Advantages

Despite the potential challenging factors that were acknowledged, the church has a few traits that I believe would directly attract the target Black thirty-five to fifty old demographic. Although the church and sanctuary have an older aesthetic, it is one that may be familiar and nostalgic to the target audience. It can be reminiscent of the churches in which they were raised or that their parents or grandparents attended. Still, there are some contrary opinions. A longstanding Deacon, Trustee, Church Clerk, and others have shared with me that they are concerned about some of First Baptist's "seasoned" look and its potential negative impact in attracting younger people. They are worried that if a younger adult has not grown up going to church, they may feel awkward with the tension of an older design.

There is validity to this concern. I understand, based on the opinions of some of the regional young adults that I have served, if younger adults grew up going to a church with a more modern appearance, they may be suspicious about First Baptist's relevance based on its aesthetic. If they did not grow up in church at all, then their presumptions about the church can be formed by whatever outside understanding they have gained throughout their life. As Briana Parker, CEO of The Black Millennial Café clarified during a *Jude 3* discussion on "Preaching to Black Millennials," "I think we make this assumption that Millennials are going to walk into church and hear traditional Black preaching and feel like they're home again. And the issue is there are many Millennials who have never walked into a church, so that can't feel like home, that can't feel familiar

because they've never been there before. So there will have to be something that they appreciate anew."⁵⁸ Although she is referencing preaching, the expectation of the hopeful churchgoer that visitors will feel nostalgia, juxtaposed with the experience of the new visitor who feels anything but nostalgia, also applies to the effect that a church's appearance and culture can have.

However, for First Baptist, based on opinions shared from the active target Church demographic, the traditional aesthetic does not seem to be a serious concern.⁵⁹ Although fully aware that the church will not be attractive to all, Millennials and Generation Xers in the congregation shared that the traditional appearance and culture is not an issue for them. One Millennial was even openly disappointed when hearing that the Church was considering some updates to modernize the sanctuary. They shared that the relevance of ministry and community is most important. Yet, the appearance and culture's potential to be unattractive must be considered and addressed to avoid misplaced confidence in something that may be offensive.

First Baptist also provides small Church community relationships that were previously attractive to many who are raising young children. I cannot provide data to confirm that all of the target demographic desires a small church community. However, within First Baptist's ministry context, it was appealing to many. A few of our new members who fit this demographic have expressed their appreciation for the "village" feel.⁶⁰ I have heard opinions from professionals during my pastorate that regularly

⁵⁸ "Preaching to Black Millennials," Youtube.com, September 28, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSxHOs1yzQE>.

⁵⁹ Appendix B.

⁶⁰ A 34-year-old gay father expressed that he chose First Baptist because he thought the small community was a great community for his autistic children.

highlight the desire for this community.⁶¹ The comfort that they have in people knowing more than just their child's name and genuinely caring about them as one of the village, provides them with a durable emotional tether to the community.

I also cannot ignore the impression I leave as Pastor. As a leader who is a member of the target demographic, those within my age bracket and culture feel that the Church's older appearance may belie something more relevant for them. Furthermore, I intentionally employ a preaching style that speaks to a wide range of generations. Subsequently many members believe I am younger than I am. That has proven useful, as being perceived as younger helps balance out what could be considered an outdated Church.

More potential advantages lie in our internet presence. With lighting, prerecorded live streams, video editing, and graphic designs, the Church creates whatever impression is desired. With editing, not only is the physical building no longer a factor, but timing, transitions, sound quality, and other production factors are all altered to manufacture the best impression. The sharing of our virtual services has also allowed us to reach people who have never, and may never, walk into our doors. The Church has garnered regular viewership from locations as far as Louisiana, California, Maryland, North and South Carolina, Illinois, and England. There have also been active accounts from surrounding towns such as Norwalk, Middletown, and Hartford. It should also be noted that some of these viewers have financially contributed and attended various workshops that the Church offered. First Baptist's social media presence has proven to be more significant to Church growth than the membership could have imagined. Yet, despite the online reach,

⁶¹ Appendix B.

the church is taking measures in its physical space to ensure that virtual visitors will not be disappointed if they attend in person. If the aesthetic of the physical church seems unrelated to what people have viewed online, there is a risk of visitors feeling manipulated. That would clearly work against developing relationships.

Important Considerations

Some unique factors must be considered when aiming to develop relationships with Black Christian professionals. There must be considerations made for their academic experience. Did they attend a historically Black college or university or a primarily White institution? Are they a part of a historically Black Greek letter organization, a primarily White fraternity or sorority, or did they refrain from attempting to join those groups? Have they previously been or are they currently a member of a Black social group? Are they a member of the “Black elite?” Do they identify with the experience of the “majority” of Black people in this country or has their experience been in the minority? Do they believe that respectability politics and negotiation is the solution for Black Americans’ advancement, or do they ascribe to a culturally prouder, and consequently defiant, living method? Did they grow up poor? Are they currently poor or in poverty despite their education or employment? Do they have knowledge of the history of Black people in this country? Did they grow up in a Black church, a White church, a multi-cultural church, or did they not attend a church at all? These questions and more inform what they may be seeking in a church.

There is no way to address all the potential answers and subsequent desires regarding our appeal to Black professionals, but there are some commonly accepted truths that must be acknowledged. The following list is not exhaustive nor is it in rank

order but it captures why these truths are of concern. Firstly, the more advanced the academic degree and the more responsibility one has in their employment, the more likely they are to have an aversion to disorganization and lack of direction. Adair T. Lummis alludes to this in her paper, “‘Heart and Head’ in Reaching Pastors of Black Churches,” when she references Sherard Burn’s online paper entitled, “The Need for an Educated Black Clergy.” Burn, in addressing Black professionals’ expectations of educated leadership, writes:

While we must give respect to our history, we are challenged to consider that the way we used to ‘do church’ a generation ago may not be the way to do it today. The is [sic] increasingly apparent as we witness the overall rise in education among African-Americans...with this increase in education comes an increase in expectation... In other words, shall we expect some measure of intellectual competency from our doctors, lawyers, and politicians (occasionally) but excuse the minister from his academic responsibility? God forbid.⁶²

Burn explicitly highlights that Black professionals are not as willing to ignore poor church leadership and management as some churches may prefer. With their education and experience, there is a minimum expectation of leadership that must be met if they are going to remain invested. Secondly, lack of transparency in financial matters and lack of ethical leadership are anathema.⁶³ Thirdly, as will be discussed in the following chapter, an ability for them to contribute beyond financial donations is preferred. Fourthly, for those who culturally identify as Black, although methods may be debated, addressing the needs of Black people in the country is vital. This issue continues to be amplified as some churches ignore the specific challenges and concerns of Black Americans in their

⁶² Adair T. Lummis, “‘Heart and Head’ in Reaching Pastors of Black Churches,” *Hartford Institute for Religion Research*, August 2006, http://hirr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/lummis_article5.html.

⁶³ Ron Edmondson, “5 Mistakes Pastors Make with Church Finances,” *Facts & Trends*, April 13, 2015, <https://factsandtrends.net/2015/04/13/top-5-mistakes-pastors-make-with-church-finances/>.

congregations.⁶⁴ Finally, it is important for Black professionals to know what community and charitable service a Church is doing and agree on their overall efforts. As will be elaborated in the following chapter, one Pastor who was interviewed said, “The Black middle class likes to brag. They want to brag on their church, they want to brag on their sorority, they want to brag on their fraternity, their family...”⁶⁵ That pastor captured the concept with the phrase, “there’s a story we’d like to be able to share.”⁶⁶ Black professionals not only want to agree with what the church is doing, but they also want to be able to tell others about it.

In the same way that generational desires must be considered when trying to attract, involve, and develop relationships, these socio-economic concerns must also be addressed. “To attract” addressing the above list may not be necessary. In contrast, “to develop relationships with” and “involve” absolutely require these be acknowledged. While developing this project, it was important that I used the listed considerations to examine my ministerial context and identify what could be considered offensive or attractive. There were a few operational points of concern, however, because the current anchoring generation also shares some of the same organizational desires as the target demographic; the membership accepted adjustments and took pride in operating more professionally.

Theology

“...but I said to the king, “May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?” The king said to me, ‘What is it you want?’ Then I prayed to the God of heaven, and I answered the king, ‘If it pleases the king and if

⁶⁴ Mathis, “The Church's Black Exodus.”

⁶⁵ Appendix E, interview 5.

⁶⁶ Appendix E, interview 5.

your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my ancestors are buried so that I can rebuild it.”⁶⁷

We need more Nehemiahs. We need more people in high-level positions with skill and connections who use that passion for ministry. That was my thought as I took the position of Senior Pastor at First Baptist. I felt that the Church had great membership and was generally self-sufficient in their operations. It was clear that they had been blessed with Moseses who started them on new paths and Joshuas who took over and continued the charge to years of success. Yet, upon my arrival, few Nehemiahs could be found. Nehemiah was a Hebrew and cupbearer to the king. He became so upset after hearing how other Hebrews were being mistreated that he prayed to God to be able do something about their condition. He then took the issue to the king who provided him with necessary materials and passage in order to go and fix the situation himself. Nehemiah served as a project manager in rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem. He did not presume to be a prophet. That was Ezra’s job. Nehemiah was simply a man who was in a position of influence, who used his connections and experience to do much needed work for his people. When I arrived at First Baptist, I wondered where the professionals who could contribute their passion and skills were? Where were all the Black professionals who, although their employment may have distanced them from some of their people’s struggles, wanted to use their position to make sure that the analogous wall is built to protect them? As the people in Jerusalem benefitted from Nehemiah’s fidelity to his people, his passion, connections, and project management skills, First Baptist similarly needs Black Christian professionals. For all of the healing, miracles, and preaching in the early Church, they also needed people such a Barnabas in Acts, who offered his property to make sure others

⁶⁷ Neh 2: 3-5 NIV.

could have. First Baptist needs people who can help provide their resources and skills to significantly help others, contribute to ministry and church growth, and ensure that the church can thrive.

Goals

To accurately measure goals, it was important to define the terms in the challenge statement. For the purposes of this project, to “attract” is to create an environment that sustains regular visitation from the target demographic. “Developing relationships with” is to leverage our attractiveness for the purpose of engendering a personal connection with our visitors rather than one where they only observe. Originally, “attract” and “developing relationships with” were to be measured by detailed accounting of feedback and regular communication established with visitors of the target demographic. Due to COVID-19, being forced into the virtual space, and people’s subsequent fatigue with online interaction, the rubric used to determine if “attraction” and “developing relationships with” were successful was reduced to the following: personal comments shared verbally, comments shared through email and text messages, and social media likes and shares.

“Involve” was to be measured by an increase in participation of our target demographic in our ministries or activities. This was done by recording direct participation in our workshops and monitoring social media shares of our unlisted content, which can only be seen with a specific link.

Again, these were not the original assessment methods. Visitor cards, headcounts, guest books, and email sign-ups were all considered in the project’s early stages. However, continued adjustments were made for new societal developments and online

opportunities. There was some early confirmation that online methods of communication and data tracking could be correctly measured. The Church welcomed five new members into its congregation during the COVID-19-induced quarantine using only the internet and phone. The new members reached out, received orientation, and have become active solely through virtual methods.

Summary

My confidence in this project was rooted in the belief that First Baptist's ability to care and love would prove to be more valuable in developing relationships than I could estimate. Furthermore, it was believed that the Church's desire to utilize a level of professionalism in their operations would allow for continual growth and adaptation to new methods. With the integration of the virtual space, it was understood that social media, online services, video conferencing software, video editing, and the like, were to be tools to expose people more effectively to the positive traits of First Baptist. Even without a concerted effort, the Church already attracted a small but involved group of attendees who fit the target audience, and visitors of our target demographic who return regularly. The ability to connect on a cultural and socio-economic level and a membership size that offers a tight-knit community proved that, with attention, the Church could draw even more.

CHAPTER THREE IMPLEMENTATION

This project had three goals, each with three strategies. Although none of the following goals were complicated in theory, adjusting implementation due to COVID-19, specifically for “Goal Three,” proved to be more arduous than expected. In the proposal, it was ambitiously, albeit incorrectly, assumed that most predictable complications would be avoided with these strategies. This assumption’s primary antagonist was the issue of limited physical and virtual availability. The pandemic exacerbated professionals’ availability constraints, which was already a significant issue. People were physically unavailable due to safety precautions and mandates. Virtually, many professionals were over-committed due to their personal and business communication transitioning to a virtual medium. Availability issues permeated every stage of this plan’s execution. As will be addressed later, the impact was mostly felt during the evaluation process.

I must recognize that due to necessity from the pandemic, ideas were birthed during the early stages of this project that were utilized before its implementation. These include, but are not limited to, modern methods of online giving, livestreaming services with professional grade video equipment and editing, creating ministries to address social justice, providing edited summaries of Bible studies for those who were absent, and hosting virtual meetings and workshops. Several of these ideas were originally conceived to create conveniences for professionals who were not always available to participate in-person. The pandemic and subsequent quarantine necessitated that these virtual

alternatives be expedited for congregants' safety and to continue regular gatherings. Due to the early pre-project implementation of these ideas, their impact, efficaciousness, and potential appeal to the target demographic could not be confidently measured. Yet, it would be naïve to presume that their integration into the standard Church practices was benign to this project's goal. Therefore, when evaluating the success of this project's implementation, I acknowledge that there may have been other unmeasurable factors influencing First Baptist's appeal to professionals.

Goal One as Outlined in Proposal

To identify and evaluate the needs and desires of the Black professionals in my ministry context. In both strategy two and three, I will reiterate the importance of First Baptist providing for them rather than the church looking for their help.

Strategy One from Proposal

First review and document what I have already been told by people from the target demographic. Over the past two years, the concern about the absence of the target demographic motivated me to ask members and visitors their opinions on how to rectify the situation.

Attracting an anchoring demographic to ensure the Church's growth has been a concern since my election as Senior Pastor. Therefore, I regularly engaged visitors and members in conversations about what they desire from a church. The information gained from these conversations served to create a lens through which I could examine the methods First Baptist could use to attract professionals. Upon review of the queries, concerns, and suggestions I heard while conversing with my target demographic, I learned that the professionals who were attracted to the Church under my pastorate

desired community for their family and children, a medium for relevant community service, encouraging messages relevant to their lives, an opportunity to give to the next generations, and professionalism in Church operations.⁶⁸ The Revelations from these dialogues and these professionals' attendance at First Baptist led me to believe that the Church had enough of these qualities to create an initial appeal. However, it was important to attempt to fill what was lacking. This was not only to attract more professionals but also to not lose those who were deciding whether First Baptist was a viable community for them and their family. With this initial step, these valuable opinions were used to recognize any appeal the Church already had as well as acknowledge any severe deterrents.

Strategy Two from Proposal

Create a questionnaire to be completed by members within the demographic and six to ten non-members within the demographic. Its purpose will be to compile a more relevant and contemporary list of needs, as well as allow me to obtain information from various subjective lenses.

To attract Black Christian professionals, knowledge from those who attended First Baptist was not enough. Their existing attendance or visitation to the Church revealed a bias. To increase the Church's appeal most effectively to new professionals, it was important to also understand the objective desires of those who were not members. To compile information that was manageable, high in quality, and actionable, this strategy aimed to balance membership input with a small selection of non-member opinions. Yet, through conversation with the site team and recognition that, by default,

⁶⁸ Appendix B.

the Church's professional members found an appeal in what First Baptist was already doing, we decided to send the questionnaires to a group comprised of 92 percent non-members. The site team was charged to give the questionnaire to their Black Christian colleagues whom they trusted to complete and respond.⁶⁹ Twenty-five questionnaires were distributed and all were completed and returned. One participant was younger than the target group, the other twenty-four responses included participants between the ages of thirty-five and fifty years old working in the following fields: healthcare, finance, real estate, media sales, education, sales, human resources, account management, law, communications, journalism, pharmacy, clinical research, economic development, medical device clinical education, broadcast television, education, computer engineering, television production, and marketing. When asked if they were a member of a church, six participants did not answer the question, eleven responded that they were members, and eight answered that they were not.

The questions' foci were confined to participants' beliefs about the Black Church's role, their Church leadership and style preferences, their views on church engagement, and any critique of the Black Church. Some of the questions did not spawn actionable responses. However, the following is a summary of those that were used to plan and execute this project.

When asked a multiple-choice question about what the Black Church should be, the most selected answers, both with 92 percent of the participants choosing them were 1) *a safe place for people to worship, learn, be provided for, and be encouraged* and 2) *a place that serves as a community center, providing as many needs and programs to the*

⁶⁹ Appendix C.

community as possible. More than half of the participants (52 percent) felt that the Church should be a *physical and spiritual fueling station*. Regarding responsibility to the membership and community, the responses reflected a strong sense of loyalty. Twenty-two of twenty-three participants answered that *The Black church should primarily focus on relating to the Black community*, two-thirds felt that the *Church should primarily focus on providing for its members* and 96 percent felt that *the Church should work with other non-Christian communities of faith to deal with social issues and concerns*. These answers ultimately became the primary considerations when creating an action plan. Black professionals desired to see the Church encourage, provide, refuel, and address socially and culturally relevant needs.

Other notable data points were that 56 percent of participants responded that their church engagement expectations were to *join their ministry of choice*. Of the remaining 44 percent, only one person responded that they *look for leadership and engagement opportunities to drive partnerships and initiatives*, and the remaining ten people only expected to *attend church services*. Although notable, this was not surprising. The professionals interviewed had little interest in becoming significantly involved in the Church. Yet, their interest in attending a church they liked was significant enough to warrant a reasonable trip. In support of the opinion shared in chapter two that professionals were willing to travel, half of the participants (52 percent) answered that they would travel more than twenty minutes to attend a church. A final point of significant multiple-choice data was the responses to a question about sermons. When asked would they want sermons to contain contemporary societal references or to only reference the Bible and worldwide Church history, every participant answered in favor of

contemporary references. Although not surprising, this was another consideration when creating an action plan. All of these answers eventually influenced the devotionals and workshops that were developed.

The responses to the short answer questions can be found with the questionnaire data in Appendix C. Some of the questions that provided actionable answers were *what are the top 3 qualities you personally look for in a church; are there ministries and activities that are a “must have” for you to attend a church; as a Black professional, what are some issues to which the Black Church needs to pay more attention; what are some common issues that disappoint you, offend you, or both, about the Black Church; and if there was one thing that you could change about the Black Church to make it more attractive to you, what would it be?* The responses to this final question triggered significant self-reflection concerning how to creatively attract professionals. There were several answers but the ones that were most intriguing were *Get younger and less rigid. Focus more on current events and tie that into the New Testament with facts. Stay away from Old Testament. Embrace technology. Find easier/faster ways for people to attend and find valid reasons for them to stay engaged outside of church; and More sermons that relate to society, less biblical references during sermons in efforts to make it more relatable.* To see that some professionals feel that *less Biblical references* equate to *more relatable* and that the Church should *stay away from Old Testament* speaks to the variety of disheartening experiences that my target demographic had in church. Relatability and relevancy are an important part of First Baptist aiming to fulfill its motto: to be the Church. However, I was not willing to directly avoid the Old Testament or use less Bible. Consequently, to attract, develop relationships, and involve them, it was

imperative to reflect on how to respond to their suggestions of relatability without abandoning fidelity to ministerial integrity.

Strategy Three from Proposal

Conduct interviews with all who have completed the questionnaire, as well as conduct interviews with three pastors who have accomplished my project's goal in their specific ministry context. Considering that there are pastors in other areas (geographic) who have successfully accomplished what I aim to achieve, I need to converse with them and document their input.

Due to time constraints and availability, I altered the interview strategy to provide a concentration of actionable ideas. Each questionnaire was reviewed to see which participants had perspectives that I felt could apply to First Baptist in its current state. The pandemic offered a unique opportunity to assess the Church's capabilities, financial standing, and the congregation's potential and willingness. There was a lack of people who were comfortable in the digital space, a scarcity of members who were professionally skilled with communication technology, and limited ability to invest significant funds into new projects. I also considered who I am, my comfort level with certain changes, and how I operate as a pastor. Therefore, despite sincere answers and suggestions from all, any participant whose questionnaire had answers that veered far from the Church's beliefs, operations, or current ability were not selected to be interviewed. Ultimately, I selected six participants from the ages of thirty-five to forty-five years old. Three lived in-state and two resided out-of-state. They listed their professions as attorney, educator, pharmacist, medical device clinical educator, and economic developer. Each interview lasted approximately one hour, during which I asked

for clarity about their questionnaire responses that sparked my curiosity or upon which I needed elaboration.⁷⁰

I interviewed five Pastors. Four of them have what are considered mega churches⁷¹ due to being Protestant and having at least two-thousand members in attendance, and one leads a historic church that Gary L. McIntosh⁷² would designate as a medium-sized congregation with a membership between two-hundred and four-hundred people. Each interview lasted one hour and I asked the same questions to each interviewee: What have been/are the most important issues and concerns for your Black professionals and have they changed over the years; have you put an intentional effort to reaching Black professionals; if so, what was done; what makes serving them different from serving other demographics in the Church, what style and content of preaching most attracts them; are there certain language/images/rituals/symbols to which they respond; do you feel that your ecological impact (community presence) attracts professionals more or less than other demographics; in 2021, are there leadership or organizational models you feel attract or offend Black professionals; (objectively) what does the Black Church need to do to create an environment where women will feel and know that they respected equal to men; (objectively) to reach Black professionals, what do you feel is absent from Black Church ministry; what must be addressed; and if they had any suggestions for my project.

⁷⁰ Appendix D.

⁷¹ “Megachurch Definition,” The definition of a Megachurch from Hartford Institute for Religion Research, accessed January 25, 2022, <http://hrr.hartsem.edu/megachurch/definition.html>.

⁷² Gary McIntosh, *One Size Doesn't Fit All Bringing out the Best in Any Size Church* (F. H. Revell, 1999), 18.

Each pastor provided a wealth of experience, insight, input, and suggestions. Although the interview transcripts can be found in Appendix E,⁷³ one of the most significant and helpful pieces of information I received was that no pastor made an intentional effort to attract Black professionals to their congregations. Along with other factors, the professionals in their congregations are attracted to their churches' ministry and service to others—both public and private—and other professionals. The application of their insight to my ministerial context provided me some comfort to be creatively relevant to accomplish this project.

Evaluation Method for Goal One from Proposal

Success will be measured by an examination of the information collected through surveying and interviewing professionals and through the information gathered from the pastoral interviews. With the necessary adjustments for time, Goal One was successfully accomplished.

Goal Two from Proposal

Examine the data from goal one as well as the data from evaluating pre-existing teams that were created to address financial security and the crisis of racism. Implement a plan of action to address two of the needs or desires revealed from this data.

Before I elaborate on the strategies, it is worth noting the implications of Goal One's findings. The participant interviews and questionnaire responses highlight a strong desire to contribute to community. Moreover, they expect the Church to be a place that

⁷³ Appendix E.

remains committed to that cause. The concern is present in most answers. However, this desire for the community to be aided is also accompanied by a strong need for personal encouragement. The need for motivation, comfort, and a welcoming and relevant community is reflected only slightly less than the desire for others to be assisted. These desires may not be tethered but often, they exist concomitantly. It is safe to conclude that Black Christian professionals, regardless of their aspiration to help others, are not protected from significant emotional burdens and therefore need a community that supports them as much as it provides aids to others.

Strategy One from Proposal

After reviewing the questionnaires and interviews, I aim to identify two immediately actionable areas that can be addressed. Although there may be a variety of suggestions and concerns, I will focus my attention on two in order to monitor progress.

The two areas decided on were encouragement for Black professionals and creating a medium for professionals to offer their skills to help others. Words like “motivating,” “encouragement,” “relevant,” and “relatability” pervade the questionnaire’s answers.⁷⁴ Regardless of some of their perceived socio-economic success, the professionals who participated shared that they need encouragement. It was also clear through the questionnaires and interviews that they would like to use their skills to help others. It is important to note that “skills” in this context are not solely their trade skills but also other talents and knowledge learned throughout their lives. An example of this was one professional interviewee, post-interview, being excited about the potential to

⁷⁴ Appendix C.

teach people how to play golf. Although golfing was not their profession, they would appreciate a medium to be able to use their skills to teach others.

Strategy Two from Proposal

In an effort to equip the church rather than equipping myself, I will create a plan to involve church members to address the identified areas.

The membership at First Baptist has proven over the five years of my pastorate that they are competent, capable, and willing to try new forms of ministry. Under normal conditions, these traits would have proven propitious for my project's implementation. However, with pandemic adjustments, there were congregants who would usually offer to volunteer their assistance but now could not participate. Due to COVID-19 measures and no in-person meetings, any member that genuinely wanted to be involved had to be technologically savvy. As with many churches, much of First Baptist's membership struggled to catch up with the new technological demands for communication. Therefore, I created a three-step plan to survey the professionals for their feelings about what they need from the church, utilize a small team (Team Lift) to find out how to address the possible needs with minimal manpower, and then execute accordingly. The first step is done casually through conversations or questionnaires, simply asking what they would like from the Church. In case the responses are focused on what people would like to see the Church do for others, a follow-up question should be posed to direct them back to their own wants. Originally, this would have been done by a small group. Yet, due to restrictions, I led this step of the project. In the future, the Church's Director of Ministry Operations will take this responsibility. The second step requires a small team, ideally of professionals, to formulate a plan to provide the need. The third step is simple execution.

Strategy Three from Proposal

Implement plans and document activity.

The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent social distancing made the process of selecting two foci simpler than expected. However, finding effective ideas that could be monitored became significantly more complicated.

The plan to encourage Black professionals and create a medium for them to offer their skills was a two-step process. To encourage professionals, we visually recorded and made available devotionals geared toward the target demographic in theme, appearance, and duration for a ten-week period. I presented each devotional and a Black professional in our congregation who is interested in cameras as a hobby recorded it in an office board room belonging to another of our professionals. Every video was approximately three minutes long and sent to selected Black Christian professionals to send to other professionals whom they thought it would benefit.

To create a medium for workshops, we used virtual teleconferencing software to host four sessions on topics led by interested professionals. Under the name “Team Lift,” derived from the phrase, “lifting as we climb,” the motto popularized by the National Association of Colored Women, we hosted interview skills workshops for adults with a focus on virtual interviews, a conversation about Black Christian professional women’s emotional well-being, a conversation exploring e-membership, and a private mentoring workshop with a twenty-three- year-old young man in dialogue with three professional men. The purpose of this latter session was to serve as a roundtable discussion for the young man to ask any questions he may have about adjusting to adulthood. Each workshop theme was selected based upon the skillsets of the volunteering facilitators or

suggestions from professionals about topics in which they were interested. A thirty-nine-year-old man located in South Carolina led the interview workshop, a psychologist and marriage and family therapist in California led the Emotional Well-being for Black Christian Professional Women workshop, and a couple in the pacific northwest who leads an e-member ministry at a mega-church in the southern United States led the e-member workshop.

Original Evaluation for Goal Two from Proposal

With plans in full operation, I will be able to review data regarding participation from the target demographic and utilize surveys for feedback. Success will be measured by positive feedback and whether participation remains consistent over three to five weeks (with positive feedback and consistent participation not being sufficient metrics for evaluation, I instead used them to determine whether the needs of offering encouragement and a medium to offer skills were satisfied).

As with other aspects of the project, the evaluation method of Goal Two was altered to measure its success more factually. Originally, it was presumed that surveys would reveal an in-depth perspective of how all participants felt. This would not only provide information about the impact of the videos and workshops, but it would also inform how to pivot to better attract and involve the target demographic. Due to the challenge of curating survey responses, the methods of obtaining feedback were altered depending on the workshop and video participants. I did not use surveys for the interview workshop, which had a low turnout. The extensive question and answer period and the positive comments were used as feedback. However, I sent out surveys for the workshop on Black Christian women's emotional well-being. Those in attendance were very

responsive, yet it felt like they still had more to offer. The surveys offered good feedback.⁷⁵ For the e-member workshop, we did not use surveys because my target demographic was scarcely in attendance. Most attendees were older than fifty years old. All feedback from the two men who participated in the roundtable was provided through conversation and text messages. Finally, instead of using surveys for the one-on-one videos, we collected statements from those who received the videos.⁷⁶

The viewership and workshop attendance proved to produce a level of attraction. Professionals' participation in sharing the videos and leading and attending the workshops proved involvement. Sadly, no virtual data marker in this implementation proves that we developed real relationships. However, the proctors of our interview workshop and e-member workshop, neither of which were members nor involved with us prior to the project, began to attend our services virtually. Furthermore, we also saw some of our workshop attendees and video recipients attending virtually.

Regarding the one-on-one videos, each video was posted as "unlisted" on YouTube and therefore could only be seen with a specified link. These links were sent to a selected group of fifteen professionals who were instructed to send the links to other professionals they thought could benefit from them. This method was utilized to prevent contaminating data with viewership from people that were not my target demographic. The data gathered on the videos and provided in Appendix F shows consistent viewership throughout the weeks.⁷⁷ However, there was a decline in participation as the series came closer to the final week. It was also revealed that although a video would gain views

⁷⁵ Appendix F.

⁷⁶ Appendix F.

⁷⁷ Appendix F.

during the first few weeks, the numbers would plateau after three or four weeks. The reasons for this are too varied to attempt conjecture. The time of year, exhaustion with virtual engagement, lack of interest in that week's theme, and others could all be reasons for the decline. Yet, the data and comments supporting the final two videos inform us that people either continued to watch or watched missed videos later. Participants' viewership, expressed encouragement, excitement for more videos, and occasional viewership of Sunday worship services prove that this was successful at attracting and developing relationships with my target demographic according to my descriptions in Chapter Two. Comments such as "please share service time," "I think the message is concise, the anecdotes were fitting. I enjoyed it! It left me wanting more, which isn't bad," "Right on time!" and "Love this!" highlight that they encouraged and motivated.

Concerning the Virtual Workshops, except for the Emotional Well-Being for Black Christian Professional Women workshop, which was led by a woman older than my target, use of my target demographic to conduct and proctor these conversations accomplished my goal of creating a medium for them to offer their skills. Their involvement not only introduced them to our congregation but their presence also served as a beacon to other professionals at First Baptist who desire to hear from people in their demographic. Due to varying factors between each workshop (theme, proctor, targeted audience) they were all strategically marketed one week before the schedule date in order to provide some control to the experiment.

In conclusion, I feel that I successfully accomplished my goal. The videos proved to attract and develop relationship throughout a ten-week period. Furthermore, I involved the professionals through leading workshops and having conversations. Not only did the

workshops involve professionals but it was also proven that through comments and reflections⁷⁸ the workshops drew further interest from my target demographic. However, although I accomplished Goal Two, I do not feel that the sole use of viewership numbers and online participation provides a substantial understanding of what specifically worked.

Goal Three from Proposal

Create a dynamic flexible model that can be implemented annually. A dynamic flexible model will not only improve upon what was done, it will also allow for circumstantial modifications. Ideally, this model would also prove to be relevant to those in other ministry contexts.

Strategy One from Proposal

Evaluate the programs accordingly.

The initial evaluation question is can virtual efforts such as videos and workshops be done regularly for most ministries at the Church? Yes. Not only was that affirmed in theory, but the church's Christian Education Ministry, Social Justice Team, and Youth Ministry have also already employed this three-step model to serve their members during the pandemic. By surveying their target demographics for what they need and desire to do, using a small team to reduce the answers down to a singular focus and create a plan for implementation, and executing the plan monitoring metrics, these ministries produced relevant ministry. Although they were not focused on Black Christian Professionals, they aimed to hear from their audience about what they desired, creatively provided a devotional experience to speak to those wants and integrated their target demographic into the process.

⁷⁸ Appendix F.

Strategy Two from Proposal

With clearer knowledge of what to do, I will create a permanent model to be maintained by the laity. The importance of involving the laity is based in commitment; laity rarely leave churches at the rate of clergy and have a sense of responsibility to their particular fellowship.

Upon creating the proposal, I stated that laity rarely leave churches at the rate of clergy and have a sense of responsibility to their particular fellowship. After some research, I can acknowledge that this statement was unfounded. However, the importance of utilizing laity at First Baptist is still vital. With three Pastors and two interim Pastors in thirty years, and all the leadership changes that occurs with those transitions, having secure lay leadership committed to carrying out ministerial efforts prevents some of the extreme organizational fallout that can happen in liminal spaces. Attracting the target demographic is vital to the life of the church. As previously expressed, the Black thirty-five to fifty-year-old professionals with families bring skills and talents, children, and often, financial consistency. Therefore, the Church's members should be prepared and trained to regularly execute a plan to attract, develop relationships with, and involve professionals. Although the pandemic altered what may have been a more intricate plan, the simple one that I created is manageable and I believe effective when correctly implemented.

Team Lift, a group made of Black professionals looking for ways to encourage one another and to offer their skills and talents to the church and larger community, will execute this model. To accomplish this, their strategies are to: 1) Annually assess what professionals are looking for in a church using the questions employed in my questionnaire as a guide, 2) Identify two major desires of professionals. One should be personal and or spiritual. The other should be communal, 3) Create an extended event or program to encourage them, and 4) Create media for them to share their skills and gifts.

Strategy Three from Proposal

Recruit laity in the target demographic to run and sustain the program.

Although I have been successful in finding laity to participate, finding voluntary leadership has proven difficult. Consequently, I am currently serving as leader. However, I have recently created and filled a new lay position at the Church that will acquire a considerable amount of Team Lift's responsibilities.

Evaluation for Goal Three from Proposal

Success will be measured by the completion of the model and the recruitment of someone to lead the program.

I am pleased with the theoretical model and those who have participated. Albeit, not securing a voluntary lay leader exclusively for Team Lift was a departure from my intended goal, assigning a lay leader that will take the responsibilities still tracks toward the desired outcome. As an adjustment, I will be involved when First Baptist implements this model again. Ideally, after that completion, it will become a completely lay-run ministry model.

Conclusion

If I measure success by attracting, developing relationships with, and involving more Black Christian professionals than First Baptist had before this project's implementation, then I conclude that this project was successful. Although physical constraints humbled my pre-pandemic imagination, I hope that the simplicity of memorably created videos and relevant workshops have left more impact and sustained reverberations with professionals than what I may have conceived before pivoting. Due to the positive response, we are currently planning "Season 2" of the one-on-ones and Team Lift is working on a new slate of workshops. Admittedly, I am disappointed that Goal Three departed from what was originally envisioned. However, I am satisfied with the temporary adjustment. I will continue to aim for lay leadership exclusive to Team Lift.

As mentioned, there are many other undocumented factors that may have contributed to a successful outcome. Without a way to measure the effects of those variables, I am not overly confident in my declaration of success. Yet, some of those unmeasurable variables, which include topics and focus of preaching, the virtual presentation of the church, and advertising the work of our ministries, were significantly impacted by what was learned during the interviews and reflections of Goal One. It is comforting to know that although there may have been unmeasurable variables affecting the success of the outcome, the project introduced many of those variables.

CHAPTER FOUR RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Unlike sociologist Bart Landry, who primarily identifies the Black middle class by the methods of Max Weber, through their position in the economy,⁷⁹ for the purpose of this project, my usage of “professional” mainly reflects E. Franklin Frazier’s career field categorizations of the Black bourgeoisie in his 1957 eponymous publication. Acclaimed, yet controversial, *Black Bourgeoisie* examines the motives, impact, and significance of the Black middle-class. His caustic assessment that the Black middle class’s financial contributions are insignificant in the American economy,⁸⁰ that their wealth is too inconsequential to wield any political power,⁸¹ that it has failed to play the role of a responsible elite in the Black community,⁸² its self-hatred and guilt manifests in aggression toward other Blacks,⁸³ and that it escapes into frivolity to shield itself from the economic and social realities of American life⁸⁴ made his analysis a springboard for continued reflection and prognostication about the contributions of the Black middle-class.

This project operates with acknowledgement of Frazier’s criticisms. Yet, differing conclusions due to the positive impact from which I have benefitted and have witnessed

⁷⁹ Bart Landry, *The New Black Middle Class in the Twenty-First Century* (Rutgers University Press, 2018), 2.

⁸⁰ E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie* (New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1997), 86.

⁸¹ Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie*, 87.

⁸² Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie*, 235.

⁸³ Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie*, 228.

⁸⁴ Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie*, 229.

from the Black professionals who Frazier enumerates. Although Frazier's designations were established over sixty years ago and were weathered by decades of accelerated cultural changes, I believe that his demographic segmentation is still relevant. Making occupations paramount and placing finances and compensation as subsequent markers for "professionals" strongly reflects the same disparity between job titles and compensation that many Black professionals still experience.

A simple glimpse at education to salary ratios show that jobs requiring more professional or educational experience do not necessarily compensate more than positions that may require less. At the time of writing, online inquiries from websites like Salary.com generically reveal that an English Professor position near Milford, CT, requiring at least one post-grad degree, pays between \$69,000.00 and \$234,000.00 salary.⁸⁵ However, a bank Branch Manager position in the same area, which may only require a Bachelor Degree, pays between \$56,000.00 and \$89,000.00.⁸⁶ Although the range of income differs substantially, there are a number of professors earning less than bank managers. Hence, to measure economics as the sole marker of a professional may exclude those who are professionally educated or skilled. Depending on career, debt, and living expenses, professionals occupying high-experience-to-moderate-income jobs may carry a middle to upper-class job title, but lower-class income. These pay disparities are made even more complex when considering pay differences across race and gender. Regarding this project's goal, Black women as a group, despite whether they are college-educated, professionally skilled, or work in an executive position, earn significantly less

⁸⁵ "Salary.com Salary Wizard- Do You Know What You're Worth?: Salary-Calculator," Salary.com, accessed January 3, 2022, <https://www.salary.com/tools/salary-calculator/professor-english/06460-milford-ct>.

⁸⁶ "Salary.com Salary Wizard- Do You Know What You're Worth?: Salary-Calculator,"

than non-Hispanic white men.⁸⁷ The National Women's Law Center reports that there is a wage gap between Black women and non-Hispanic men in 94 percent of occupations.⁸⁸ Frazier's professional designations, either intentionally or inadvertently, allow the inclusion of moderate to lower income, yet highly skilled and educated, Black people to be recognized as professionals.

Frazier segments the Black bourgeoisie into the professional and technical group which consists of "schoolteachers, preachers, physicians, dentists, lawyers, college professors, entertainers, embalmers, funeral directors, social workers, nurses, and only a small sprinkling of persons in the technical occupations such as architecture, engineering and chemistry."⁸⁹ He then describes his next group, "managers, officials, and proprietors." This group includes, "buyers, postmasters, public administration officials, credit men, purchasing agents, shippers of farm products, railroad conductors and union officials as well as proprietors of business enterprises."⁹⁰ Third, he lists clerical workers as "bank tellers, bookkeepers, cashiers, secretaries, stenographers, telephone and telegraph operators, mail carriers and railway mail clerks..." Finally, he lists the occupational group as, "craftsmen, foremen, and kindred workers..."⁹¹

Although many of these jobs are no longer as significant as they once were, and new positions have been added to the list of "professionals," I believe Frazier's apportioning still works. The Professionals and Technical group; The Managers, Officials, and Proprietors group; the Clerical Workers group; and the Craftsmen,

⁸⁷ Sharon Epperson, "Black Women Make Nearly \$1 Million Less than White Men during Their Careers," CNBC (CNBC, August 3, 2021), <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/08/03/black-women-make-1-million-less-than-white-men-during-their-careers.html>.

⁸⁸Epperson, "Black Women Make Nearly \$1 Million Less."

⁸⁹ Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie*, 48.

⁹⁰ Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie*, 48 This is not in your references.9.

⁹¹ Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie*, fifty.

Foremen, and Kindred Workers group remain relevant as employment groups for Black professionals. In this chapter, I will examine the Church's significance and the needs and leadership expectations of these Black professionals in the context of attracting, involving, and serving them.

Biblical/Theological

What is the Church for the professional class? More specifically, what is the ecclesiology of the Black church for the Black Christian professional?

The results of this project's questionnaire was already addressed in chapter three. However, the responses to three specific queries should be revisited for this research question.

When asked what they believed the Black Church should be,⁹² the two multiple choice answers that tied at twenty-three responses each was *A safe place for people to worship, learn, be provided for, and be encouraged*; and *A place that serves as a community center providing as many needs, and programs to the community as possible*.⁹³ When asked what word or phrase best describes what you feel the Church should be,⁹⁴ 13 people responded *Spiritual and emotional fueling station* and nine responded *community*.⁹⁵ The last question of importance was a follow-up from the preceding one, *Please share any other thoughts about what you believe the role of the Black Church should be*. The top responses to this question were that participants thought the Black Church's role should be community, a place committed to serving those in need (those who are and are not a part of the local church), developing its people

⁹² Participants were asked to check all answers that applied to their perspective.

⁹³ Appendix C.

⁹⁴ For this question, the participants could only pick one answer.

⁹⁵ Appendix C.

spiritually (especially children), and political and social action (although social action and politics were not significantly recognized in the previous answers).⁹⁶

These answers reflect what was posited in this project's proposal, *that, for the professional class, the Church is a sanctuary for believers and repository to be equipped for service*. Yet, what does it mean to be “a sanctuary for believers” and what are the expectations of “service?”

Sanctuary

Miqâdsh is, “a consecrated thing or place, espec. A palace, sanctuary or asylum: chapel, hallowed part, holy place, sanctuary.”⁹⁷

Unlike some English words used in the United States, the definition of the word sanctuary has remained consistent over the years. From new online dictionaries to older hardcopies dating from the 1970s, the definition of sanctuary remains: “a sacred place; that part of a church which contains the altar; a place set apart as a refuge; and a church or other building where, in the middle ages, certain categories of lawbreaker could take refuge from pursuers and be inviolate.”⁹⁸ I visit this definition, not presuming that it is revelatory but to highlight what sanctuary meant to the participants when they chose it as an answer: A sacred place of refuge. Add to that their description of community and it becomes clear that they see the Church as a safe space to exist as people of God and people in community.

⁹⁶ Appendix C.

⁹⁷ James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible/Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary* (Gordonville, TN: Dugan Publishers, 1984), 70.

⁹⁸ Bernard S. Cayne, *The New Webster's Dictionary of the English Language: International Edition* (New York: Lexicon International - Publishers Guild Group, 1992), 883.

Historically, the significance of this space and the loyalty it engenders has sustained Church attendance for years. In 2000, Marvin McMickle highlighted this in *Preaching to the Black Middle Class*. When describing the Black middle-class commute from their suburban homes to their church homes in the inner city, he writes, “To their credit, even after they moved out of the inner city, members of the Black middle class would return to their home church every Sunday. However, that sense of home, involved the church building itself, not necessarily the neighborhood in which the church was located.”⁹⁹ Even McMickle’s critique of their fidelity to the Church, but abandonment of the surrounding community, supports that they view the church as their real community, even at the expense of carrying out God’s mission to those outside the doors. It is this place of refuge that remains a relevant need for Black Christian professionals. Yet, this view does have opposition.

In his 1963 work, *The Negro Church in America*, E. Franklin Frazier plainly states, “the church is no longer a refuge.”¹⁰⁰ He argues that the Church could no longer function as the protected silo of Black culture that it once was (due to the continued necessary integration of Black people into the social life of the masses). Frazier openly asserts “...the Negro church can no longer serve as a refuge as it did in the past when the majority of Negroes lived in the South under a system of racial segregation and the majority of the Negroes in the South lived in rural areas.”¹⁰¹ Although I do not disagree with his assessment within his context and definition of refuge, I do believe that the

⁹⁹ McMickle, *Preaching to the Black Middle Class*, 4-5.

¹⁰⁰ Edward F. Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), 75.

¹⁰¹ Frazier, *The Negro Church in America*, 76.

Church is still a personal, spiritual, and cultural refuge for many in my target demographic.

Despite, and sometimes due to, their socio-economic class, many Black professionals desperately desire to grow stronger bonds to their cultural faith community. In contrast to many multicultural worship environments, Black Churches create a place for Black people to comfortably exist in their “Blackness,” whether that be common cultural behavior or cultural concerns. A professional who was slightly uneasy with the idea of their Black church becoming more multicultural told me that although they did not have anything against other races of believers, they felt uncomfortable with the pressure to have to wear their weekday societal mask on Sunday. Barna Group provided data that showed that Black adults top adjectives for the Black church in 2020 were “safe,” “important,” “reliable,” and “healing.”¹⁰² Even during time of political turmoil, like that which has engulfed the United States from 2015 to today, the Black Church offered a refuge of comfort. The Barna Group offers research that reveals “two in three Black adults say that the Black church offers comfort, control.”¹⁰³

In light of feelings of political disempowerment, Barna’s findings show the degree to which the Black Church represents a respite for Black Americans. Two-thirds of Black adults (29% agree strongly, 36% agree somewhat)—including eight in 10 who are part of the Black Church (37% agree strongly, 43% agree somewhat)—say that an association with the Black Church brings comfort, as it is a place where Black people have control in their lives. This point of view appears to be more popular than it was 24 years ago; in 1996, half of Black adults (50%) agreed that Black Church membership fostered a sense of comfort and control. Given the coinciding increase in a broader sense of powerlessness, present attendees in Black churches may see their congregations as autonomous spaces to

¹⁰² “Most Black Adults Say Religion & the Black Experience Go Hand in Hand,” Barna Group, February 18, 2021, <https://www.barna.com/research/sobc-2/>.

¹⁰³ “For Black Americans, the Black Church Counters Feelings of Political Powerlessness,” Barna Group, January 18, 2021, <https://www.barna.com/research/black-church-politics/>.

reclaim agency and be a part of worship communities influenced by the vision and hopes of Black people.¹⁰⁴

There are many criticisms about the Black Church and some of its reputation for inhospitable behaviors, some of which will be discussed later. However, Barna's numbers confirm that the Black Church community is still a place that the majority of Black adults identify as a safe sanctuary. Furthermore, the data reflects that the feeling of comfort and control that the Church offers has increased over the past few decades.

Another facet of the Black Church's refuge identity deals directly with the intersectionality of faith and societal issues. The Black Church is expected to provide theological sanctuary. Whether people are considered theologically conservative or progressive, the Black Church is expected to be an environment that melds faith and our lives and experiences. In an interview for this project, one Pastor explicitly stated that their Church's theologically progressive lean combined with familiar Black Church tradition is what drew Black Christian professionals to their location. Despite, or due to, their complex ministerial context—a historic Church with a large traditional edifice in a primarily Black urban city experiencing gentrification—this Pastor says about their professionals, “The big thing that they come for, is that most of them love the Church, grew up in the Church, but became differently persuaded in terms of their own kind of theological and social commitments...and they wanted to be in a progressive context that felt like church.”¹⁰⁵ Although the interviewed Pastor was successful in providing the necessary experience for their congregation, this expectation of Church as a theological

¹⁰⁴ “For Black Americans, the Black Church Counters Feelings of Political Powerlessness.”

¹⁰⁵ Appendix E, Interview 3.

sanctuary has been an issue for some White, multicultural, and even some Black churches over the past few years.

Many of these churches who do not aim to worship or serve at the intersection of faith and societal issues experienced some difficult departures. In Mathis' article in *The Atlantic*, we see this in a statement from a Chicago Pastor:

Swanson has framed the stakes of churches' silence in stark terms. 'A multiracial church which never confronts white supremacy is a white church,' he tweeted in April. By that, he meant it's a church 'still mostly interested in white people's comfort,' Swanson explained to me over the summer. Put another way: A church's silence on police killings communicates almost as clear of a message as ALL LIVES MATTER on the marquee.¹⁰⁶

As potent as Swanson's words are, it is Black Christians' recognition of this feeling that shows the importance of the sanctuary as community and a place of refuge. Mathis continues,

Amber Wright, 39, felt a jolt of recognition when she read Swanson's tweet this spring. The absence of a church-wide stand against police brutality had frustrated Wright for years. "I remember there was no comment or commentary [at my multiracial church] about Trayvon Martin [or] the series of Black people slain in the streets," she told me. By the time of Floyd's killing, on May 25, Wright knew she was done. "It's important to us that we go to a church where we feel the leadership can call these issues out in a way that speaks to the worth of my life and the life of my husband and my children," she said.¹⁰⁷

The behavior that Mathis reported is not only an issue with the congregants of churches but also pastors. With the increasing recognition of racism and prejudice in the United States over the past decade, the silence of larger Christian bodies such as conventions also created tumult. In December 2020, the Southern Baptist Convention suffered the loss of one of its major Black churches, The Church Without Walls (formerly known as

¹⁰⁶ Mathis, "The Church's Black Exodus."

¹⁰⁷ Mathis, "The Church's Black Exodus."

Brookhollow Baptist Church). Pastor Ralph Douglas West withdrew the church from the SBC because of their decision that critical race theory was incompatible with the Bible.

West wrote,

When I came back “home” to Southwestern, I even encouraged other ministers to do the same. I took President Adam Greenway’s invitation to return as a statement of good faith, that the seminary wanted to welcome me and many other Black ministers to contribute to its legacy.

The statement on critical race theory and intersectionality has soiled that good faith. I cannot maintain my affiliation any longer and therefore am withdrawing from Southwestern Seminary. Nor will I associate with the SBC any longer.¹⁰⁸

Pastor West was moved to his controversial action by the Southern Baptist Convention’s inability to resolve its public stance against racism with its unwillingness to welcome theories that have been helpful in framing the problem of racism.¹⁰⁹ West’s withdrawal from Southwestern Seminary and the SBC came at a time when several Black Pastors were leaving for similar reasons.¹¹⁰

Black Christians’ awareness that they may be unknowingly aligned with Christians who are either dismissive of Black people’s need for sanctuary or are the cause of the need for such sanctuary is an all-too-familiar experience. This feeling for Black people, regardless of their socioeconomic standing, that the Christian religion is not inherently a safe space, reaches back to slavery and colonialism. Many have grown accustomed to, even expectant of, people using faith to justify oppression. Therefore, when churches are too cowardly or naïve to create a safe atmosphere of love and justice,

¹⁰⁸ Rev. Dr. Ralph West, “Commentary: Where I Stand on the Statement by SBC Seminary Presidents,” *Baptist Standard*, December 16, 2020, <https://www.baptiststandard.com/opinion/other-opinions/commentary-where-i-stand-on-the-statement-by-sbc-seminary-presidents/>.

¹⁰⁹ West, “Commentary.”

¹¹⁰ Sarah Pulliam Bailey and Michelle Boorstein, “Several Black Pastors Break with the Southern Baptist Convention over a Statement on Race,” *The Washington Post* (December 24, 2020), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2020/12/23/black-pastors-break-southern-baptist-critical-race-theory/>.

it produces cynicism, distrust, and anger toward those who, in the name of Christ, profit from others' pain and are satiated in others' struggle. Langston Hughes courageously expressed these feelings in 1931, when looking to draw attention to the hypocrisy of white Christian racists. As he reflected on the unjust arrest of the Scottsboro Boys, Hughes penned the controversial *Christ in Alabama* which was published in *Contempo* magazine, saying that "Christ is a nigger,/Beaten and black," Mary is a, "Mammy of the South," and "God is His father:/White Master from above..."¹¹¹ This is reminiscent of a sentiment that Albert J. Raboteau recorded in his book, *Slave Religion*. Raboteau, sharing the response of slaves during the plantation missions of the mid- to late-1800s writes, "Some slaves resented the message of docility preached by the missionaries and rejected it out of hand as 'white man's religion.'"¹¹² He references a quote from Charles Colcock Jones as he recalled a sermon that he preached in 1833,

I was preaching to a large congregation on the *Epistle of Philemon*: and when I insisted upon fidelity and obedience as Christian virtues in servants and upon the authority of Paul, condemned the practice of *running away*, one half of my audience deliberately rose up and walked off with themselves, and those that remained looked any thing but satisfied, either with the preacher or his doctrine."¹¹³

Colcock Jones continues, "...some solemnly declared 'that there was no such an Epistle in the Bible'; others, 'that they did not care if they ever heard me preach again!'...there were some too, who had strong objections against me as a Preacher, because I was a *master*, and said, 'his people have to work as well as we.'"¹¹⁴ Jones, a white man

¹¹¹ Arnold Rampersad, ed., *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes* (New York: A Division of Random House, Inc, n.d.), 143.

¹¹² Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), 176.

¹¹³ Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 294.

¹¹⁴ Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 294.

preaching a message of compliance to slaves, using the scripture to encourage them to not run away, for many Black Christians mirrors some of the preachers they have heard in churches over the past few years. Roboteau goes on to discuss the inevitable outcome of trying to indoctrinate slaves with oppressive theology: hush harbors. Through contradistinction, he explains that where slave owners curated and curtailed plantation religion to keep slaves as obedient as possible, hush harbors were forbidden worship moments that slaves created for slaves. Roboteau describes the dichotomy of the two experiences,

Many slaveholders granted their slaves permission to attend church, and some openly encouraged religious meetings among the slaves. Baptisms, marriages, and funerals were allowed to slaves on some plantations with whites observing and occasionally participating...Masters were known to enjoy the singing, praying, and preaching of their slaves. Nevertheless, at the core of the slaves' religion was a private place, represented by the cabin room, the overturned pot, the prayin' ground, and the 'hush harbor.' This place the slave kept his own. For no matter how religious the master might be, the slave knew that the master's religion did not countenance prayers for his slaves' freedom in this world.¹¹⁵

The hush harbor experience allowed Black people to protect their place of faith from the intrusion of others who would use it as a tool of oppression. As Katie Geneva Cannon stated simply in *Katie's Cannon*, "There was a critical difference between what Whites tried to teach and what slaves actually learned. Against all odds, Afro-American slaves created a culture saturated with their own values and heavily laden with their dreams."¹¹⁶ In its own way, the Black Church as a sanctuary in a modern world is indicative of a continued hush harbor tradition.

¹¹⁵ Roboteau, *Slave Religion*, 219.

¹¹⁶ Katie Geneva Cannon, *Katie's Cannon: Womanism and The Soul of The Black Community* (New York: Continuum, 1995), 33.

Dr. Frank Thomas establishes his feelings about this tension in the introduction of his book, *How to Preach a Dangerous Sermon*. He writes,

As an African American person, why would I agree to this moral order that asserts my own moral subservience, or as Jay-Z says, ‘participate in my own invisibility?’ I cannot support any party, ideology, religion, moral order, and so on that delegitimizes my full humanity in the human order. It is the height of injustice and an insult to demand that the maligned support those that question and deny their full humanity.¹¹⁷

Thomas’s bold proclamation that he cannot participate in a religion that delegitimizes his humanity implies that he will only participate in a religion that legitimizes or validates him. As he continues to write about the need to preach sermons that speak against injustice and the systems and ideologies that propagate injustice, we must recognize that the pulpits of minority churches, the places of community and refuge, will host most of these sermons. When Christine Marie Smith introduced her book, *Preaching Justice*, a compilation of sermons from diverse backgrounds, she wrote, “As a homiletician and teacher of preachers, I am constantly aware that Euro-American voices still dominate every aspect of the field of homiletics. This is not just a scholarly, theoretical issue for me; this is an issue of justice.”¹¹⁸ As academia continues to try and educate theologians to speak to issues that affect minorities, the Black Church continues to be one of the few presumed safe spaces where culturally relevant truths are acknowledged.

Still, sanctuary is about more than the sermon. The Black Church is also a cultural sanctuary for many Black professionals. For some, the Black Church may be the only place that genuinely celebrates Black History Month, offering significant recognition of forebearers. It may be the only place incorporating Kwanzaa or celebrating Dr. Martin

¹¹⁷ Frank A. Thomas, *How to Preach A Dangerous Sermon* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2018), xxxi.

¹¹⁸ Christine Marie Smith, *Preaching Justice: Ethnic and Cultural Perspectives* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2008), 1.

Luther King Jr.'s legacy in its fullness, not the historically taxidermized version frozen in 1963. Often, the congregation engages with one another outside of the church. Therefore, some of the same people they see at church are the same people who are part of their social circle. Consequently, the church may acknowledge those cultural and social connections. At First Baptist, there have been specific Sundays when the anniversary of a historically Black fraternity or sorority was recognized. The successes of children who are part of college prep programs or received commendations have been celebrated. A few moments have even been offered for the winners of Church-hosted food competitions to gloat. The familiarity of culture, music, food, attire, behavior, communal interaction, tradition, and more all feel like refuge when Black people work in a world in which they feel like a foreigner. This seems especially true for those who were raised in the Church. For better or for worse, as Henry Louis Gates writes in *The Black Church*, "I suppose no one who was raised in the church ever fully leaves it."¹¹⁹ Even the Black upper class, who historically avoided worshipping with the more demonstrative denominations, still gathered in churches that provided them socioeconomic cultural sanctuary. Whether described as "self-hating" or other more derogatory terms, they did as other Black Christians did. They gathered in places where they could engage with other culturally like-minded people. Lawrence Graham writes in *Our Kind of People*,

The Episcopal faith was attractive because of its formality, and both faiths were appealing because they were known for having well-educated clergy and a small number of members. Well-to-do Black Americans with roots in the West Indies had natural historic ties to the Episcopal Church, which had served a major role in Jamaica and other former British colonies for several generations."¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Henry Louis Gates, *Black Church: This Is Our Story, This Is Our Song* (New York: Penguin Books, 2021), 79.

¹²⁰ Lawrence Otis Graham, *Our Kind of People: Inside America's Black Upper Class* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2000), 13.

He continues, “And for some of the most cynical and status-conscious members of the Black elite, the two denominations were particularly appealing simply because most Blacks were not of that faith.”¹²¹ As elitist and separatist as these views are, Graham highlights that the Black elite’s impetus in seeking exclusivity was rooted in finding a church culture that supported their biases. Although I am not inclined to label such problematic preferences as a search for cultural sanctuary, it still reflects that even Black elitists were looking for a church of like-minded people.

Sadly, there are times when the Black Church has been neither a cultural nor a spiritual refuge. The church’s views and behavior over the years have warranted severe criticism and disappointment regarding its effectiveness. Katie Cannon, Kelly Brown Douglas, Mitzi Smith, and many more Womanists have held the Black Church accountable for its actions, negligence, and silence in supporting unjust views and behavior toward Black women, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and others not deemed as important as straight Black men. Space has been reserved later in this chapter for a deeper reflection on Black women and their contributions and struggles.

However, to honestly discuss when the Black Church has failed at being sanctuary requires openly stating that the Black Church has a history of actively or complicitly supporting the social and theological devaluing of Black women. Cannon boldly writes that, “we need to do an analysis of the sexist content of sermons in terms of reference to patriarchal values and practices. Particular attention needs to be given to the objectification, degradation, and subjection of the female in Black preaching,”¹²² Cannon points out what many men have ignored for generations: that constantly preaching with a

¹²¹ Graham, *Our Kind of People*, 13.

¹²² Canon, *Katie’s Cannon*, 128.

tone of misogyny and heaping sexist judgements toward women, sometimes as a group, and sometimes specifically, is unacceptable. Furthermore, validating these behaviors by weaponizing a sexist hermeneutic when preaching about the flaws of Jezebel, “gold digging” Delilah, Mary the prostitute, the woman at the well, or the old argument for why men shouldn’t listen to women—Eve—perpetuates the issue and equips the next generation of men to see things in the same way. Kelly Brown Douglas continuing the conversation concerning the Church’s inefficiency, writes in *Sexuality in the Black Church*, “A Black sexual discourse of resistance is also constrained to make clear that homophobia and concomitant heterosexist structures and systems (those structures and systems that privilege heterosexuals while discriminating against non-heterosexuals) are sin. In other words, it is not homosexuality but homophobia that is sinful.”¹²³ With acridity, Douglas explains that it is not the homosexual or any other non-heterosexual that is the problem within our churches; it is the hate that Christians have for them. The hate is the sin.

The Black Church’s fumbling of creating sanctuary does not stop with women and the LGBTQ+ community. This project’s goal of attracting Black professionals creates the potential for classism. It would be foolish to believe that the elitism that Graham mentioned and Frazier condemned is no longer an issue for the Black Church. Sheryll Cashin expresses this sentiment as clear as anyone can. She writes, “The Black middle and upper class have their own issues with their lower-income brethren. We do not like to own up to it publicly, but there is a serious class division in Black

¹²³ Kelly Brown Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church: A Womanist Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 126.

America...”¹²⁴ As she continues writing about the schisms between classes, some lighthearted and some dangerous, I am reminded of when I have witnessed glances of derision from middle-class Black Christians directed toward a struggling congregant.

Poverty, addiction, attire, sexuality, and more can all be markers that are used for classist judgements. First Baptist has regulated much of that over the years due to the core middle-class membership remembering their humble beginnings and holding others accountable for their inappropriate behavior. It is the presence of these self-reflexive members that aid in attenuating the potential for unregulated elitism, classism, and judgement toward others. Without them, this project could result in a Church that chases people away rather than welcoming them. Yet, I am not naïve enough to believe that thwarting classist behaviors can be done without intention. Therefore, incorporated throughout my project’s devotionals were reminders that “we are not better.” Every workshop was also intentionally available to people of different classes to ensure variety and familiarity. Refuge and sanctuary are achievable and sustainable to all only if the church continues to see themselves in others.

It is clear that there is still much work to do to truly be sanctuary. From Marvin McMickle, Frank Thomas, and others, we have seen the challenge to preachers to proclaim a relevant de-westernized and decolonialized prophetic message. We see names such as Joshua L. Mitchell and Otis Moss III establish the challenge of modernity to the Black Church. They charge us with removing the constraints of anachronistic traditionalism and establishing relevance for a generation of people who yearn for a socio-spiritual community. Furthermore, there are numerous theologians and academics

¹²⁴ Sheryll Cashin, *The Failures of Integration: How Race and Class Are Undermining the American Dream* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 252.

from past and present who have taken the challenge to educate our Black Church leaders to create a more inclusive and efficacious place of refuge.

Finally, we must acknowledge the perceived character of the Black preacher when discussing the Black Church as sanctuary. Although Barna Group's 2020 study reports that most Black adults see the Pastor as the most important leader in the Black community,¹²⁵ for most of our lifetimes, and in many cases with good reason, the Black preacher has also been a target of suspicion, anger, and remained under scrutiny. The folktale, *Jump in Mama's Lap*, is an example of the long history of low expectations.

Someone came to the door, and the little boy went to the door. His father asked him who was at the door, and he told him the Methodist Minister. So the father said, "Go hide all the liquor."

Then again, there was a knock on the door, and he asked him who was there. And he told him it was the Episcopalian Minister; so the father told him to go hide the food.

The next one came up was a Baptist, and he told him, say "Go jump in Mama's Lap."¹²⁶

The old stories and consistent new revelations about the flaws of Black preachers are all part of the Black professional's default knowledge about the Church. From sexual infidelity to embezzlement, the Church leadership's reputation can make it difficult to achieve a sense of sanctuary. How can the church be the sanctuary that people need if the people are suspicious that the Shepherd is the predator? For the Black Church leader, it is important that they remember the words of Joe Trull and James Carter, "Being a good minister is obviously a matter of *being*; however, it is also a matter of *doing* and a matter of *living*. As with each leg of a three-legged stool, each of these ethical supports is

¹²⁵ "Most Black Adults Say Religion & the Black Experience Go Hand in Hand," Barna Group, February 18, 2021, <https://www.barna.com/research/sobc-2/>.

¹²⁶ Daryl C. Dance, *Shuckin' and Jivin': Folklore from Contemporary Black Americans* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 59.

needed to keep us from falling and failing in our moral choices.”¹²⁷ The Church cannot be a place of refuge and sanctuary if the Pastor is not doing the work and living the life.

Service

One Pastor I interviewed leads a Church that is well-known for its service to the Black community. When answering the question, *what have been or are the most important issues for Black professionals at your Church*, this Pastor highlighted “building relationship with God, building lateral relationships with one another, and finally, ‘how can I serve?’ That becomes a continual question for professionals. ‘How can I serve?’ And because our church is so Afrocentric, ‘what can I do for my people?’”¹²⁸ This Pastor spent some time talking about how much professionals in that congregation wanted to give back and the various ways that everyone wanted to contribute. One wanted to teach a skill-based class and another wanted to teach correct wardrobe etiquette.

A clear way to see how much Black professionals see the Black Church as a place of service is to observe their disdain toward churches that don’t overtly serve those in need. Their lack of support, concerns about the leaders’ ethics, and distancing from Church culture speak for itself. When Black professionals attending First Baptist are engaged in dialogue, questions or curiosity about charitable service, social service, and social justice efforts eventually enter the conversation. Upon review of the research, it is unknown whether or not this desire stems from a superficial “savior complex”—a shallow desire to save those you see as less fortunate—or a true desire to help those in need. However, the urge to be involved with service efforts is undeniable.

¹²⁷ Joe E. Trull and James E. Carter, *Ministerial Ethics: Moral Formation for Church Leaders*, second ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 47.

¹²⁸ Appendix E, Interview 5.

One can presume that the professional part of Black professionals' economic status distances them from seeking the same Church experience as those who are impoverished or financially struggling. Still, that does not necessarily stop them from wanting to do something to help others. Barna Group reported in January 2021 that for most Black adults, the Church's focus must be spiritual and social.¹²⁹ Therefore, when they think of an institution that focuses on the Black community and worships in the Black tradition, service to those in need is expected as a minimum. On the questionnaire, twenty-one out of twenty-three people answered that they believed the *Black Church should primarily focus on relating to the Black community*.¹³⁰ A Black Church that does not serve or equip its people to serve is generally considered grossly negligent of its duties. The combination of Jesus's teachings of helping the least of these,¹³¹ the expectation of the charitable nature of the Church, and awareness of the historical struggle of Black people make a church that is inactive in helping the community, unattractive to many Black Christian professionals.

Joshua Mitchell references a lack of service as an impediment to the engagement of Black Millennials. What the Black Church calls "young people" or "young adults," regularly seeing so much need, yet so much inaction, do not hide their frustration with what is perceived as the Black Church's hypocrisy. Mitchell accounts hearing from a stressed campus minister that several members of her ministry walked away from her and the Church. Their reason was because after the death of Sandra Bland in a Waller County jail (less than an hour away from the campus), "they felt that the church had done nothing

¹²⁹ For Black Americans, the Black Church Counters Feelings of Political Powerlessness," Barna Group, January 18, 2021, <https://www.barna.com/research/black-church-politics/>.

¹³⁰ Appendix C.

¹³¹ Mt. 25.

to address what was happening right in the church's backyard. For them, the church had been silent in its response – there were no marches, no protest, no provisions made to help those who would be on the ground trying to make a change in the wake of Sandra Bland's death."¹³² Although these students were undergraduates at the time, Mitchell's research covers the full age span of Millennials, which includes the younger segment of my target demographic. Therefore, his conclusion of what will keep Churches relevant to Millennials also applies to many professionals in my target demographic. He writes,

The congregations who will remain relevant among Black Millennials are the congregations who win souls while engaging in community activism and organizing, public policy reform, and social justice initiatives that increase the vitality of Black and brown life. These congregations are unafraid to speak from the pulpit against social injustices committed in the lives of Black and brown people – churches invested in and working for the good of the communities where they are planted.¹³³

My survey responses support Mitchell's findings about Millennials. When asked the optional question, *what is the desired sermon message*, five of the seven responses were "Personal Encouragement and Responsibility to helping and loving others." When asked *to what does the Black Church need to pay more attention*, there were short answers including "Racial injustice and inclusion;" "Educating our community regarding career and job opportunities, entrepreneurship and higher education;" "Strengthening the Black family, offering human services for the community, social/political issues, economic development;" and "what is happening in the community and schools, mental health."¹³⁴ These responses—which thematically span from charitable works to economic empowerment to social justice—not only confirm that there is an expectation for the

¹³² Mitchell, *Black Millennials & The Church*, 78.

¹³³ Mitchell, *Black Millennials & The Church*, 79-80.

¹³⁴ Appendix C.

Black church to serve but also that the expected service should aim to be life-changing and more than superficial charitable efforts. Direct charity is anticipated. It is the bedrock for Churches. However, some Black Churches still struggle to meet the expectation of activism, justice-seeking, and promoting inclusivity.

When separating acts of direct service and charity from efforts like fighting for social justice, we begin to see long-lived disappointment in the Black Church's lack of visible action. In *The Spiritual Lives of Young African Americans*, Dr. Almeda M. Wright highlights that these feelings are not a modern development. While she highlights W. E. B. Dubois's assertion that the Church was never at the forefront of justice-seeking movements and would never be,¹³⁵ she examines Jeremiah Wright's comments that the Church was in the same place during the Black Lives Matter movement as they were when they were silent with tumorous benignity during the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s.¹³⁶ As she researched the various historical components that led to inaction from the Black Church concerning major issues over the years, she states a truth that the Black Church aims to ignore: "...in reflecting on the contemporary activism of young African Americans, this is not the first generation to have a less-than-stellar connection with the Black Church or Christian religious traditions."¹³⁷ Sadly, the Black Church fostered a reputation that has many people expect direct acts of charity and service but also expect that the Church will cower away from fights against systematic and systemic issues that plague its own people.

¹³⁵ Almeda M. Wright, *The Spiritual Lives of Young African Americans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 157.

¹³⁶ Wright, *The Spiritual Lives of Young African Americans*, 156-157.

¹³⁷ Wright, *The Spiritual Lives of Young African Americans*, 158.

The severe need for the Black church to meet these expectations of direct service and the fight for social justice is enhanced by the donating behaviors of Millennials. In 2019, I participated in a certificate program in non-profit leadership from one of my alma maters. Although there were many benefits of those courses, I most remember learning about different generations' giving habits. We were told that Millennials (and some Generation Xers) rarely ever give to religious institutions compared to Boomers and Builders. However, what was interesting was learning that statistically, they will generously give to specific causes. This means that statistically, Millennials must be invested in an organization's specific programs or they will not donate at all.

Moreover, in 2016, *Barrons* ran an article by Abby Shultz that specifically discussed how traditional fundraising models would prove to be less effective with Millennials. The article highlights that they want to be directly involved with being a part of the solution to the problem. Shultz writes, "Historically, nonprofit organizations 'were the gateway to do good,' says Derrick Feldmann, Achieve's president. But Millennials don't look at institutions that way today, Feldmann says. They are more concerned with addressing issues that matter to them, in the most direct way possible, and the organization is simply a vehicle to make that happen."¹³⁸ If the aforementioned behavior of Millennials is their default when considering the support of any organization, then imagine the increased judgement Black professional Millennials have when an institution they expect to be a hub of service is found wanting.

¹³⁸ Abby Schultz, "How Millennials Are Changing the Face of Philanthropy," *Barrons* (December 6, 2016), <https://www.barrons.com/articles/how-Millennials-are-changing-the-face-of-philanthropy-1480984160>.

Research, Pastor interviews, and Millennials' giving behavior all inform that Black professionals, despite whether their motives are selfish or altruistic, are interested in serving those in need. Involving Black professionals clearly requires giving them something to do that they value. With charitable work as the basic expectation for Christian churches, Black professionals welcome opportunities to participate. Furthermore, with justice-seeking service being the desired hope for churches, Black professionals may not only contribute and participate but they may also find the church to be a relevant spiritual home.

Sociological/Psychological

*What are the needs of Black Christian professionals, and should the church specifically aim to address Black Christian professional needs?*¹³⁹

As evidenced by Mathis's *The Atlantic* article and the departure of Black Pastors from the Southern Baptist Convention, churches' silence and mishandling of visible injustice, racism, and oppression triggered a departure of many Black people from faith communities they deemed irrelevant. The COVID-19 pandemic ostensibly accelerated this process due to mandatory quarantines, giving people an excuse to act on long-felt urges to shift their commitments. Many seemed to use the pandemic as an opportunity for an ecclesial *tabula rasa*, capitalizing on the ability to find an unofficial "virtual pastor" or an e-community that better serves their needs.

While in conversation with a Black Christian professional who leads an e-ministry at a church they never physically attended—approximately two-thousand miles from their residence—they shared that their previous local church so grossly neglected

¹³⁹ In my proposal, the second questions was originally "would Black professionals attend and become part of a fellowship if their needs and desires were not met?"

what they spiritually needed that they left without a plan of what to do next. Once they found an opportunity to join a church that provided their needs, even if virtual, they committed.¹⁴⁰ This account, like the others, indicates a wider tendency among modern Black Christians to leave congregations and religions that seem irrelevant.

It has been widely studied that with each passing generation, people are attending church less and avoiding organized religion more. In March 2021, a Gallup poll revealed that U.S. church membership fell below the majority for the first time. With a decline from 73 percent in 1937 to 47 percent in 2020,¹⁴¹ people as a whole have not seen the need to engage in faith as their predecessors have; Black Christians attendance mirrors this decline. Pew Research found that “Black Millennials (49 percent) and members of Generation Z (46 percent) are about twice as likely as Black members of the Silent Generation (26 percent) to say they seldom or never attend religious services at any congregation.”¹⁴² Interestingly, although some people believe that a primarily Black congregation that addresses Black issues would draw more Black attendees, other issues are even more important. That same Pew Research article found, “...while 34 percent of Black Americans say that if they were looking for a new congregation, it would be ‘very important’ or ‘somewhat important’ for them to find a congregation where most other attendees shared their race, most (63 percent) say this would be either ‘not too important’ or ‘not at all important.’ Higher priorities include finding a congregation that is welcoming and that offers inspiring sermons.”¹⁴³ The combination of freedom to leave

¹⁴⁰ Appendix D, Interview 1

¹⁴¹ Jeffrey M. Jones, “U.S. Church Membership Falls below Majority for First Time,” *Gallup.com* (September 22, 2021), <https://news.gallup.com/poll/341963/church-membership-falls-below-majority-first-time.aspx>.

¹⁴² “Faith and Religion among Black Americans,” Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project, March 25, 2021, <https://www.pewforum.org/2021/02/16/faith-among-black-americans/>.

¹⁴³ “Faith and Religion among Black Americans”.

unfulfilling churches, desire for a relevant church experience, and comfort in not committing to any church, forces faith communities that desire to remain relevant to Black professionals to identify and address their needs.

What Are the Needs of the Black Christian Professional?

Cultural-Theological Concerns

The need to feel safe in one's theological setting is part of the Black professional's expectation of the Church. Regarding many Black Christians, a church's ostensible culturally relevant theological stance creates much of that sense of safety. As noted in the findings from Pew Research, a congregation's race matters less than whether or not a congregation is welcoming and the sermons are inspiring. Although it cannot be assuredly specified what "welcoming" meant to those who participated, due to human nature, it is safe to conclude that "welcoming" includes feeling like a church's views do not add to or allow any form of oppression on the attendee or anyone about whom they are concerned. Any presumption beyond that would require an uninformed level of conjecture.

Without clarification, that same conjecture would be necessary to discuss what "sermons are inspiring" means to everyone who participated. At a base level, we can acknowledge "inspiring's" literal definition: "to move by divine influence; to fill with creative power; to stimulate; to affect, to suggest, to be the motivating but unnamed power behind; to inhale; to breathe into."¹⁴⁴ However, as we consider what we have already established regarding Black Christians' disappointment with Churches and preachers who are silent to their issues but the feelings of comfort and control that the

¹⁴⁴ Cayne, *The New Webster's Dictionary*.

Church has offered in recent times, we must examine what kind of message Black Christian professionals consider inspiring.

The Need for Inspiring Sermons

In times of insecurity and struggle, the congregation's ears are tuned to and listening for a relevant message. Although some remain at churches with what they consider poor preaching, few would argue that they desire powerful, relevant, and inspiring preaching. Still, for generations, it was begrudgingly and unofficially agreed upon that the Black Church's music was tantamount, if not paramount, with its preaching. The significant budget and attention that even financially flailing churches allocate to their music ministries and sound budgets demonstrate this. Yes, there is no doubt that music is one of the spiritual cornerstones of Black worship. One could argue that in the Black church, music and participation in musical worship serves as an unofficial sacrament. Its attraction power and ability to draw the congregation into reflection, hope, and praise has been many churches' anchoring appeal to potential members. Unexpectedly, when the COVID-19 induced quarantine of 2020 occurred, it led to a deluge of Church services storming the internet. In only a few months, a local church's music ministry had to compete with every other streaming church service online. With the ability for viewers to watch any service they desired, churches that depended on their music ministry's attractiveness no longer had the same leverage. The only thing that a church had that it could uniquely offer that congregants could not get elsewhere is the specific prophetic voice occupying their pulpit.

First Baptist was one of the Churches that lost that musical leverage; albeit there was still healthy communication with the Black professionals in the membership. Their

complaints about life struggles, which encompassed job insecurity, pandemic adjustments, and increased racial tension, significantly informed this project regarding what messages were needed for inspiration. The positive response to the One-on-One devotionals proved that Black Christian professionals desire to hear messages that directly acknowledge their unique space. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that they also desire to hear the same recognition in sermon form. Many Black professionals, despite their successes, still experience the tension, confusion, inner turmoil, and sometimes anger. At the risk of appearing sarcastic or taunting, one main reason for their strained existence is summed up in their racial experience: it is because they are Black. Ellis Cose effectively describes this feeling in *The Rage of a Privileged Class*. In a response to the suggestion posed by former New York City mayor, Ed Koch, and Black management consultant, Edward W. Jones, that one of the major racial issues in the city was that white people and Black people were not willing to talk honestly about race, Cose clarifies, “we are also disinclined to listen.”¹⁴⁵ Although published in 1993, Cose’s assessment of the Black middle class’s anger still works for many Black professionals today. He writes,

...the answer to ‘Why are these people so angry?’ is not at all simple. For one thing, none are angry all the time. A few deny their anger even as they show it. And while all African Americans, in one way or another, have spent their lives coping with racial demons, the impact has not been identical. Some have been beaten into an almost numb submission, into accepting that they will never reach the goals they once thought possible. Others have refused to accept that being Black means being treated as a lesser human being, and they respond to each insult with furious indignation. A number wonder whether, given the blessings they have received, they have any right to be angry at all.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ Ellis Cose, *The Rage of A Privileged Class: Why are Middle-Class Blacks Angry? Why Should America Care?* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 13.

¹⁴⁶ Cose, *The Rage of A Privileged Class*, 13.

He truthfully pens, “Many well-educated, affluent Blacks have already found their way out of inner-city ghettos, yet they have not escaped America’s myriad racial demons. Consequently, they remain either estranged or in a state of emotional turmoil.”¹⁴⁷ The Black professional exists in a mental, emotional, and situational frustration described in the Black axiom, working twice as hard to get half as far.

We can argue that there have been moments in history when societal progress and Black professionals’ successes meant that they did not need as much inspiration. Sadly, those moments have not only been historically short-lived but their eventual waning also arguably adds to Black people’s frustration. Even Cose wrote *The End of Anger* seventeen years after *The Rage of a Privileged Class*. It acknowledges that the rage he found in the Black middle-class a generation earlier did not exist in the next generation. He clarifies in an NPR interview that this is not due to the abatement of racism but to more opportunity for professional success. He says, “No one Black who I talked to thinks we have arrived at a point where we are an equal opportunity nation.”¹⁴⁸ He continues, “People were not saying discrimination has disappeared.”¹⁴⁹ Fully clarifying, Cose writes that the message was that “the kind of discrimination that made it impossible to aspire to rise to a certain level is nowhere anywhere near as heavy as it used to be. The result is that a young Black Harvard M.B.A. can actually reach for the stars. There may still be discrimination, but if you successfully navigate around trouble, you can still achieve your goals.”¹⁵⁰ He identifies the reason for the phenomenon in his latter publication. He writes,

¹⁴⁷ Cose, *The Rage of A Privileged Class*, 12.

¹⁴⁸ Ellis Cose, “‘The End of Anger’ in the Black Middle Class,” *NPR* (May 31, 2011), <https://www.npr.org/2011/05/31/136824394/the-end-of-anger-and-the-beginning-of-optimism>.

¹⁴⁹ Cose, “The End of Anger’ in the Black Middle Class”.

¹⁵⁰ Cose, “The End of Anger’ in the Black Middle Class”.

That phenomenon, I have argued, seems to stem from three things. One is a sort of generational evolution in which each successive American generation harbors fewer racial hang-ups and preconceptions than the one that preceded it. Another is a transformation of American values: The idea of racial equality—at least in the abstract—has become an almost universally shared ideal. And the third is an event singular in American history—the election of a man whose race alone would have made it impossible, in another era, for him to dream, however audacious he might be, of becoming the president of the United States. That man’s election, whatever one thinks of his performance on the job, has changed in some substantial way how many Americans view their country.¹⁵¹

Cose’s research reflects that with the political climax of the election of the first Black president, Barak Obama, Black professionals felt that society was moving progressively, creating hope for what could be achieved. Grievously, the vengeful resurgence of overt racism during and since the end of Obama’s presidency has sent the pendulum of Black professional discontent inevitably revisiting its arc. However, this time it is not being pulled by the force of professional prejudice and limitations; it is being pulled aggressively by the reblooming of long seeded—at times, mistakenly dormant—racism that found new life over the last ten years. In *White Fragility*, Robin DiAngelo partly reveals how that same progress that Black professionals believed awaited them due to President Obama’s election also triggered a resurgence of bigotry and racism. In her chapter “Racial Triggers for White People,” she states,

When disequilibrium occurs—when there is an interruption to that which is familiar and taken for granted—white fragility restores equilibrium and returns the capital ‘lost’ via the challenge. This capital includes self-image, control, and white solidarity. Anger toward the trigger, shutting down and/or tuning out, indulgence in emotional incapacitation such as guilt or ‘hurt feelings,’ exiting, or a combination of these responses results.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Ellis Cose, *The End of Anger: A New Generation’s Take on Race and Rage* (New York: Ecco/CopperCollins, 2012), Chapter 11, Paragraph 5, Kindle edition.

¹⁵² Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), 106.

DiAngelo notes that when White people lose the privileges that they once took for granted, privileges that make them feel comfortable in their preferred place in society, it becomes intolerable, triggering anger, fear, silence, and other problematic responses. They challenge whomever or whatever they identify as the trigger until they return to feeling like they are in their appropriate societal position. This is especially problematic with the Black professional due to their socio-economic status. Many Black professionals already inhabit job positions and financial brackets that were once solely available to White men. Even for the professional, there is no absolute protection when society turns toward hate.

Ella L. J. Edmondson Bell and Stella M. Nkomo in their Foreword to *Race, Work, and Leadership, New Perspectives on the Black Experience*, address why the resurgence of societal bigotry enters the workplace. They write,

Some of these phenomena are not new. The problem is that they continue to happen long after the end of segregation and declarations of a postrace America. While we can hope they are aberrations, organizations should take these developments seriously. What happens in society spills over because organizations are *in* society, not apart from it. Employees do not leave their race or racial beliefs at the entrance when they enter the workplace.¹⁵³

The Black professional has no successful buffer that prevents them from ultimately feeling the effects of racism, injustice, or any form of societal prejudice, in their workplace. Therefore, when discussing what inspires Black professionals in modernity, we must also consider that Black people who live through these societal ebbs and flows of perceived societal progress need more inspiration after the depressing and enraging

¹⁵³ Laura Morgan Roberts, Anthony J. Mayo, and David A. Thomas, *Race, Work, and Leadership: New Perspectives on the Black Experience* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2019), xiii.

ebb than before. Black people echo the rhetorical questions of Ibram X. Kendi in the preface to *Stamped from The Beginning*:

How could a Donald Trump follow Barak Obama into the presidency? How could the candidate of angry bigots, the Klan's candidate, the stop-and-frisk candidate, the candidate of border walls, the candidate that said a Latino judge can't be objective and that 'African Americans and Hispanics' live in 'hell' – how could this birther theorist follow the first Black president? How could Trump rise when Obama's rise seemed to make it impossible?¹⁵⁴

These questions seek answers about the unfathomable speed at which this country returned to a place where Black people and other minorities were targets of overt racism in the highest offices of politics and business. Despite authors like Jon Meacham writing *The Soul of America* to inspire hope after the terrible protest of white supremacists of Charlottesville, WV that led to a vehicular terrorist attack that murdered one and injured thirty-five,¹⁵⁵ the resurging historic racial tension has continued to return with no regard for socio-economic class.

Black Christian professionals need prophetic inspiration, as they have found themselves in a hostile professional and societal climate that many never thought they would experience. As Ta-Nehisi Coates wrote in his fictional work, *The Water Dancer*, “It is a cruel thing to do to children, to raise them as though they are siblings, and then set them against each other so that one shall be a queen and the other shall be a footstool.”¹⁵⁶ To teach children that they are equal and that society is a meritocracy, only for society to determine which one will be less valued than the other, is abhorrent. Should the church aim to specifically address this need of inspiring Black professionals? Absolutely.

¹⁵⁴ Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from The Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (New York: Bold Type Books, 2017), ix.

¹⁵⁵ Jon Meacham, *The Soul of America: The Battle for Our Better Angels* (New York: Random House, 2018), author's note, paragraph 1.

¹⁵⁶ Ta-Nehisi Coates, *The Water Dancer* (New York: One World, 2020), 98.

Although this question will be answered in depth later in the chapter, there is no need to delay an obvious answer.

In the same way we recognize that we must speak to the conditions of the poor and the oppressed, in the same way we recognize that we must dismiss agism and speak to the conditions of the elderly, in the same way that we recognize that we must speak to the conditions of our students in subpar educational systems and inmates in subpar prisons, we must also speak to the Daniel-in-Babylon-like existence of our Black Christian professionals. Daniel, who was upper-class among his own people, chosen by his oppressors to learn their ways and excel in their lifestyle, still needed to connect with his God. The same went for his contemporaries, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. They were selected, educated, and even changed their names. Yet, despite their perceived success, they still worked for a relationship with their God. Like many of our Black Christian professionals, staying true to their culture and rejecting complete assimilation forced them to lean more on their faith as they dealt with life threatening prejudice. Black Christian professionals must hear from God for the same reasons.

Despite the education of my target demographic, sermons need not be uber-intellectual. In Darryl Sims's, *Evangelizing and Empowering the Black Male*, Ralph West takes time in his chapter, "Preaching to Intellectuals," to list some notable preachers who preached to expanding intellectual congregations. After listing some of the historical figures such as George Arthur Buttrick and Helmut Thielicke, he lists more recent preachers who have also accomplished the task. He says, "More recently, the homiletical genius of the likes of Rev. Gardener C. Taylor, Rev. Sandy F. Ray, Rev. Otis Moss Jr., Rev. James Earl Massey, Rev. J. Alfred Smith, and Rev. A. Lewis Patterson serve as the

epitome of preachers who preach to intellectuals.”¹⁵⁷ What is notable about this list is that the preachers mentioned could preach to any congregation and reach all of the represented demographics. As he champions their preaching ability, West continues: “In fact, each of these great minds find just as much comfort in colleges, universities, seminaries, and divinity schools as they find in the local pulpits.”¹⁵⁸ Relevance to the listener’s lived life is key.

When the survey asked if the participants *wanted to hear a sermon using contemporary societal references or to only reference the Bible and worldwide history*, the answers were completely in favor of societal references. Although that is unsurprising, it highlights the need for sermonic relevance. When asked, *what do they look for in a church besides the sermon*, multiple people still answered “sermons.” When asked to list some things that disappoint them about Church, “sermons that lack depth,” and “lack of engaging sermons,” made the list. When asked what could make the Church more attractive, one person specifically said, “More sermons that relate to society, less biblical references during sermons in efforts to make it more relatable.”¹⁵⁹ Although that last response speaks more to that person’s experience with preachers who could not make the scripture connect to modern life experience, it relates to all the other answers regarding the need for relevant sermons.

I would be remiss if I did not also acknowledge what is *not* considered inspirational to my target demographic. Relatable sermons for the professional do not usually include the preacher being overly “churchy” or the preacher flaunting their

¹⁵⁷ Darryl D. Sims, *Evangelizing and Empowering the Black Male* (Chicago: MMGI Books), 84.

¹⁵⁸ Sims, *Evangelizing and Empowering the Black Male.*, 84.

¹⁵⁹ Appendix C.

education through utilizing an ostentatious lexicon. There are some who are impressed by a preacher's adherence to the traditionalism of worship, their resumé, and educational experience. However, as Rev. Orsella Hughes shares in Otis Brown's documentary, *Generation Why*,

Nowadays, everybody has the undergrad, the master's degree, and the Millennials especially. They go right from their undergrad to their master's degree program, and most of them are even entrepreneurs. And the disconnect is that you can't talk only churchy stuff to the Millennials. Millennials want to hear about entrepreneurship, they want to hear about home ownership, they want to hear words like endowment, they want to hear words like trust funds..."¹⁶⁰

Rev. Hughes's observation is one that highlights that what may have once been relevant may be no longer. Although academic knowledge is valued, with the increase of degreed congregants with professional experience, the prophetic voice is becoming the sole offering that cannot be found elsewhere in professional circles. And if that is the sole offering, it must meet them at the center of their existential and spiritual needs.

For the Black professional, not only should sermons be inspiring in a general and global context, but they should also be inspiring within their "Babylonian" context. General encouragement of miracles, the gift of peace, deliverance, grace, mercy, and salvation are for every listener. However, there should also be sermons that speak to their racial and socio-economic reality. It is true that every Black Christian professional will not relate to Cone or Black liberation theology, but that does not change that they need to hear a sermon about who and where they are. In his 2016 book *Introduction to the Practice of African American Preaching*, Frank Thomas addresses the need for relevance with Millennials. Written five years before the completion of this chapter, some of those

¹⁶⁰ *Generation Why? FilmFreeway*, accessed October 14, 2021, <https://filmfreeway.com/generationwhY577>.

Millennials he referenced could now be forty years old. Thomas's words remain stinging true, "If the African American church does not address race and economics, or is not thoughtful and skilled in addressing these issues, Millennials will consider the church not relevant to their lives, needs, and struggles."¹⁶¹ A few paragraphs later he warns, "If preaching does not engage the biggest subjects with real depth and honesty, then preaching itself will go the way of disco and the blues."¹⁶² He continues,

Preaching and preachers will be respected for their comedic entertainment value as emotional relief, or ceremonial chaplains for invocations, weddings, funerals, dire emergencies, and in time of national crisis such as war, mass shootings, and terrorism. But they will not be consulted and valued for the most important ongoing civic, social, political, economic, and spiritual uses of the lives of young people.¹⁶³

Through conversations with clergy, it is clear that there are some who already feel like the preacher has been relegated to formality rather than relevancy. In this book, *How to Preach A Dangerous Sermon*, Thomas specifies some of what he considers honest, deep, relevant, and "Dangerous Sermons." He establishes that every preacher should have what he calls, a "moral imagination."¹⁶⁴ He lists its four qualities. Firstly, a preacher must have the capacity to envision equality and represent that by his physical presence. Secondly, they must have empathy as a catalyst or bridge to create opportunities to overcome the past and make new decisions for peace and justice. Thirdly, preachers must find wisdom in ancient texts, sources of truth, and the wisdom of the ages. Finally, they should address

¹⁶¹ Frank A. Thomas, *Introduction to the Practice of African American Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016), 136.

¹⁶² Thomas, *Introduction to the Practice of African American Preaching*, 137

¹⁶³ Thomas, *Introduction to the Practice of African American Preaching*, 137.

¹⁶⁴ Thomas, *How to Preach A Dangerous Sermon*, 45.

the audience in the language of poetry and art that lifts and elevates the human spirit by touching the emotive chords of wonder, mystery, and hope.¹⁶⁵

In one conversation with someone who has led e-member ministries at multiple mega-churches, they shared a very important truth. When asked about what most appealed to their e-members who fit into my target demographic, they plainly said that it was the message. They expressed that technological tools could be a nice draw, but they clarified again that it was the message. Their experience revealed that it does not matter how easy you make it for people to get to your church, if they do not want to hear what is being said, they will not attend.¹⁶⁶ Relevance matters.

Addressing Sociological Issues

We had a dream...

That one day our sons and sighters would grow up to be
Doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, preachers, politicians,
And business owners...

Business owners?

Yes, Business owners. With a capital B.
Because back in the day, we *were* the Capital, see?
Bought and sold per pound of flesh
Tried and tested under great duress
The great “race” started with a gun shot [bang]
Sprinting to the finish line, before the closing bell rang.

This Land is our land.

Plowed by a sacred hand.

And claimed through a courageous stand.

¹⁶⁵ Thomas, *How to Preach A Dangerous Sermon*, 45.

¹⁶⁶ Appendix E.

- Laura Morgan Roberts, 2017¹⁶⁷

Many Christian professionals, especially those between the ages of thirty-five and fifty years old spend an increasing amount of time away from the Church. As employment opportunities and social and family responsibilities increase, they find themselves, sometimes incessantly, in what some refer to as “mixed company.” And this “company” may not share the same values, practices, or behaviors as the Black Christian. It is in this environment that the Black Christian professional must navigate racial macro and microaggressions; process their feelings about the injustices that they see in the workplace, home life, and the world; network and create associations with people who may not be trustworthy; temper the occasional feeling that their success may be a sign of “selling out,” and more.

With the increasing recognition that Black professionals carry unique concerns, the Harvard Business Review Press published *Race, Work, and Leadership, New Perspectives on the Black Experience*. Edited by Laura Roberts, Anthony Mayo, and David Thomas, this volume, by its own description, “responds to the fierce urgency of the moment – the need to bring the best thinkers to the table to provide broader access to the widest range of innovative, grounded ideas for moving forward. This book offers entrée not only to the voices that are represented through the data we present but also to the collective wisdom of our contributors.”¹⁶⁸ In a chapter entitled “Feeling Connected,” Stacy Blake-Beard, Laura Morgan Roberts, Beverly Edgehill, and Ella F. Washington discuss the importance of engagement, authenticity, and relationships in the careers of diverse professionals. As they highlight the Black professional space’s uniqueness, they

¹⁶⁷ Roberts, Mayo, and Thomas, *Race, Work, and Leadership*, 2.

¹⁶⁸ Roberts, Mayo, and Thomas, *Race, Work, and Leadership*, 4.

write, “Women and people of color are often in institutional milieus where they are one of few; this tokenism is accompanied by isolation, increased scrutiny, and presumptions about their competence.”¹⁶⁹ Blake-Beard, Roberts, Edgehill, and Washington understand that they may not be the majority, but it is important to have people who understand the difficulty and challenges that they face in their isolated, scrupulously over-judged positions.

Acknowledgement of Societal Struggles and Awareness

“The people I wanted to work with left, and those who stayed are not minority friendly. As a minority, I feel that they don’t want me there. It is so obvious. The head partner doesn’t even speak to me. I try to downplay my cultural differences and laugh at their stupid jokes. I play the game and let them think I believe in the firm’s goals.” - Patricia Faison Hewlin¹⁷⁰

To discuss attracting, developing relationships with, and involving Black professionals without considering their societal struggles would dismiss their full human experience. Since the motive behind this project is not to take advantage of professionals but to aid them and allow them to help others, striving to intently understand their societal challenges is vital. However, if the Church is to become a compatible community for them, it is just as important that the Church understands the Black professional’s awareness that their own socio-economic standing makes expressing their feelings about injustice complicated. If the Church cannot find a way to make room for professionals to have a safe space to discuss these issues, it must, at minimum, find a way to speak to

¹⁶⁹ Roberts, Mayo, and Thomas, *Race, Work, and Leadership*, 151.

¹⁷⁰ Patricia Faison Hewlin, “Wearing the Cloak: Antecedents and Consequences of Creating Facades of Conformity,” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 94, no. 3 (2009): 732.

their struggle, however it may be done. Black professionals must know that their struggle is acknowledged; not only the personal scenarios previously listed but also the communal struggle of witnessing injustices around them. Many of them live their entire lives without this acknowledgement, quietly waiting to become senior citizens (when people care about their concerns again). They know they are doing better than many and understand that some would see their complaining as if they are ungrateful for what they have. Frazier believes that this guilt or shame may come from repressed hostility toward Whites manifesting as self-hate.¹⁷¹

Although that may be accurate in many instances, Cose acknowledges another truth that is relevant to many Black professionals today. He eloquently addresses this when talking about how surprised UCLA researchers were when, after doing a study following the vicious public police beating of Rodney King in 1991, they found that the majority of Blacks had little confidence in the police; believed that Blacks do not usually get fair treatment in the criminal justice system; and felt that American society owed Black people a better chance in life than they currently had.¹⁷² Cose writes,

As the astonished UCLA researchers discovered, economic success is no remedy for despair over what Blacks perceive as deeply rooted racial inequities. But why should that be? Why shouldn't Blacks who are affluent, well-educated, and blessed by life acknowledge their good fortune and be content? Why should Blacks making six-and seven-figure incomes identify at all with the likes of Rodney King?

Part of the answer lies in David Dinkins's epigram: 'A white man with a million dollars is a millionaire, and a Black man with a million dollars is a nigger with a million dollars.' His obvious point is that many whites have great difficulty differentiating a Black go-getter from a Black bum, that at night on a lonely stretch of highway a malicious cop is as likely to bash one Black head as another.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie*, 226.

¹⁷² Cose, *The Rage of A Privileged Class*, 183.

¹⁷³ Cose, *The Rage of A Privileged Class*, 183-4.

Cose highlights the Black professional's issue of people simply being confused as to why a well-to-do Black person empathizes and is disturbed by issues of injustice toward other Black people. The challenge of this diptych-like existence, how they identify themselves opposing how others identify them, should be recognized. I have spoken with several Black Christian professionals who have unintentionally expressed their need for this acknowledgement by an inability to stop discussing these burdens once they get started. After spending so much time feeling like there is no safe space to share their struggles, when they find one, they become verbose.

This is not only a challenge in their cultural community, it can also be a significant struggle in their careers. With the increased awareness of the unjust killings and abuse of Black people from the 1994 beating of King, to and through the killing of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Amhaud Arbery, and torturously more to date, the feelings that Cose spotlighted during King's time have exponential magnified. Trying to manage these frustrations in a workspace with employees who insolently display their apathy or agreement with these events is unbearable to many. Added to this frustration was the seditious insurrection of January 6, 2021, and the bold involvement of and support from acquaintances and colleagues. These situations and conditions have fatigued once intrepid Black professionals to exhaustion and avoidance. In July 2021, Curtis Bunn reported for NBC News on "Why most Black office workers are dreading the return to offices." He quotes the views of a managing partner of a diversity and inclusion firm. He writes,

Hill added that Floyd's killing compounded an already established discomfort in the office.

For Black people, after seeing George Floyd saying, 'I can't breathe,' as he's being murdered and the social justice movement that followed, working in an

office that feels suffocating is not welcoming,” Hill said. “And then Jan. 6 — imagine seeing a co-worker among that mob that stormed the Capitol. The office was already a high-stress place for many Black workers. Those events have heightened the stress.”¹⁷⁴

To gain a deeper understanding of their struggle, it is important that through enumeration, a generational profile is established as it relates to their influences and race relations. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the thirty-five to fifty year old Black people in this country—the older Millennial’s (arguably Xennials) and young Generation Xers—come from the “keep it real” influence. These generations were born into a culture being formed by a rebellious reaction to injustice, destruction of the village community due to drug use—even more demolished by President Reagan’s “war on drugs”—the prison industrial complex, lack of educational resources, financial insecurity, and more. This is embodied by the culture’s most celebrated and notorious child, hip-hop, which continued and continues to shape the culture. They grew up influenced by the rage of injustice, the powerful pictures of poverty painted by the early fathers of hip-hop in The Bronx, Public Enemy’s appeal to fight the power, the Native Tongues Afrocentric affirmations, NWA’s irreverent cry against the police, 2 Live Crew’s disregard for what was deemed appropriate, The Notorious B.I.G.’s lyrical incivility, the outspoken Tupac Shakur’s message of defiance, Onyx’s aggressively crude indifference to respectability, Wu-Tang Clan’s boldly claiming a seat at the table, Master P’s nonobservance of placating the door keepers of the business, Outkast’s demand to be heard according to their rules, DMX’s honesty of being in and yet causing pain, and many more.

¹⁷⁴ Curtis Bunn, “Why Most Black Office Workers Are Dreading the Return to Offices,” *NBC News* (July 29, 2021), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/black-office-workers-are-dreading-return-offices-rcna1539>.

They heard Chuck D proclaim, “I’m Black and I’m proud, I’m ready, I’m hyped, plus I’m amped/ Most of my heroes don’t appear on no stamps/ Sample a look back; you look and find nothing but rednecks for 400 years, if you check.”¹⁷⁵ They listened to Tupac introspect with lyrics like, “In time I learned a few lessons, never fall for riches/ Apologizes to my true sisters; far from bitches/ Help me raise my black nation reparations are due, it’s true/ Caught up in this world I took advantage of you/ So tell the babies how I love them, precious boys and girls/ Born black in this white man's world.”¹⁷⁶ These are the generations, embodying in-part these messages of resistance and anti-respectability who must now navigate a workplace that demands compliance for their livelihood.

In their formative years, they may have memorized Maya Angelou poems, felt a kindred spirit to the pronouncements of Malcom X (prior to becoming the slightly more inclusive el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz), listened to Sounds of Blackness, celebrated Kwanzaa, and grew up watching *A Different World*, *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, *Martin*, and *In Living Color*. They connected with Spike Lee’s *Do The Right Thing*, memorized “Good and Bad Hair” from Lee’s *School Daze*, cried when Ricky was shot in John Singleton’s *Boyz in the Hood*, were enraged watching Ryan Coogler’s depiction of the real last moments of Oscar Grant III in *Fruitville Station*, and were elated as they donned African attire to attend the movies and celebrate Coogler’s *Black Panther*. They have a mental register where they keep the names of Black people who have been mistreated in their lifetime. From the earliest recollections of Rodney King; Abner Louima; Amadu Diallo; Sean Bell; and Kevin Richardson, Antron McCray, Raymond Santana, Korey

¹⁷⁵ Public Enemy, *Fight The Power*, CD, (Los Angeles, Motown Records, 1989).

¹⁷⁶ Tupac Shakur, *White Man’s World*, CD, (Los Angeles, Death Row, 1996).

Wise, and Yusef Salaam (The Exonerated Five, formerly called The Central Park 5); they kept their mental inkwell full as they continued to add to the list for decades. In the last ten years, they have added to their terrible log, Travon Martin; Eric Garner; Michael Brown; Alton Sterling; Rev. Clementa Pinckney, Cynthia Hurd, Rev. Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, Tywanza Sanders, Ethel Lance, Susie Jackson, Depayne Middleton Doctor, Rev. Daniel Simmons, and Myra Thompson (The Charleston 9); Atatiana Jefferson, Freddie Gray, Tamir Rice, Philando Castile, Sandra Bland, Breonna Taylor, and many more. These generations lived through watching Jesse Jackson be the first Black man (and second Black person behind Shirley Chisolm) to run for president on the Democratic ticket to watching Barack Obama successfully be elected the first Black President twenty-six years later, followed by Donald Trump's presidency, which made it a priority to erase much of President Obama's legacy.

It is with those cultural influences and more that these generations' predecessors instilled them with the charge to become successful while still recognizing and identifying with their culture. Sadly, to manage the struggle to be their whole selves in the workplace, many must exist in an exhaustingly tedious perpetual state of disassociation, never being able to fully perform their charge. In regards to this split existence, Blake-Beard, Roberts, Edgehill, and Washington state, "Not only are relationships surrounding diverse professionals important, but a growing body of work points to the need for diverse professionals to bring their whole selves to work."¹⁷⁷ They continue, "For example, Phillips, Dumas, and Rothbard (2018) discussed the costs to diverse professionals when they leave important parts of their lives and identities at the

¹⁷⁷ Roberts, Mayo, and Thomas, *Race, Work, and Leadership*, 152.

organizational door. As importantly, they noted the negative implications that also accrue to organizations as a result of this compartmentalized approach.”¹⁷⁸ Black professionals are constantly figuring out how to sojourn in potentially hostile territory while never sincerely having their concerns recognized. If the Church is to develop real relationship with professionals, then a space should be created to nurture and speak to the challenge they have of not feeling comfortable being their full selves, sometimes in their own community, and sometimes at work.

In the African American folktale, *Sinking of the Titanic*, the character Shine decides to pick his life over the desires of his boss. For the professional, this decision to pick the needs of a healthy life over economics is not an easy decision. Should they be Shine, or keep working for the reward remains an on-going battle?

It was 1912 when the awful news got around
That the great Titanic was sinking down.
Shine came running up on deck, told the Captain, “Please,
The water in the boiler room is up to my knees.”

Captain said, “Take you black self on back down there!
I got a hundred-fifty pumps to keep the boiler room clear.”
Shine went back in the hole, started shoveling coal,
Singing, “Lord, have mercy, Lord on my soul!”

Just then half the ocean jumped across the boiler room deck.
Shine yelled to the Captain, “The water’s ‘round my neck!”
Captain said, “Go back! Neither fear nor doubt!
I got a hundred more pumps to keep the water out.”

Your words sound happy and your words sound true,
But this is one time, Cap, your words won’t do.
I don’t like chicken and I don’t like ham –
And I don’t believe your pumps is worth a damn!”

The old Titanic was beginning to sink.
Shine pulled off his clothes and jumped in the brink.
He said, “Little fish, big fish, and shark fishes, too,

¹⁷⁸ Roberts, Mayo, and Thomas, *Race, Work, and Leadership*, 152.

Get out of my way because I'm coming through."

Captain on bridge hollered, "Shine, Shine, save poor me,
And I'm make you as rich as any man can be."
Shine said, "There's more gold on land than there is on the sea."
And he swam on.

When all them white folks went to heaven,
Shine was in Sugar Ray's Bar drinking Seagram's Seven.¹⁷⁹

Fictitious Shine was able to leave his job, jump from the titanic, and grab a drink while those who thought they were better than him drowned. Some may find the story funny and others may find it disturbing. Nevertheless, Black professionals with families usually do not have the kind of luck to leave their job the way Shine did. To attract, develop relationships with, and involve them, they must know that their unique struggle of existing in two worlds is recognized.

Communal Concerns and Transcultural Tension

To acknowledge Black professionals' societal struggles and awareness also means that there must be honest exploration of their motives and intent. It is difficult to aid such a specific demographic as they battle through injustice-induced mental and emotional struggles if we have not honestly explored the potential reasons why the struggle exists.

The Black Christian professional between thirty-five and fifty years old is not only a product of the aforementioned influences but, as mentioned in chapter two, they are also digital natives. Their familiarity with and regular use of technology forces them to confront varying degrees of injustices on a daily basis. From the possible home page of their email service to an automatic news notification on their mobile device, to trending topics and curated articles on their preferred social media platforms, to their favorite

¹⁷⁹ Henry Louis Gates and Maria Tatar, *The Annotated African American Folktales* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2018), 422-33.

podcasts, to all-news networks, to traditional nightly news, there is no escaping the awareness and burdens of injustice. The same rings true locally. Whether through water cooler talk or text messages and messaging apps, they cannot avoid news about how someone was treated at the job or in their neighborhood. This creates stress and often anxiety. Black culture's communal nature fosters a unity that engenders the feeling that we all experience the same pain. Former President Barak Obama's words about the killing of Trayvon Martin embodies these feelings and explains the difficulty of conciliation. On July 19, 2013, President Obama said,

You know, when Trayvon Martin was first shot I said that this could have been my son. Another way of saying that is Trayvon Martin could have been me thirty-five years ago. And when you think about why, in the African American community at least, there's a lot of pain around what happened here, I think it's important to recognize that the African American community is looking at this issue through a set of experiences and a history that doesn't go away.

There are very few African American men in this country who haven't had the experience of being followed when they were shopping in a department store. That includes me. There are very few African American men who haven't had the experience of walking across the street and hearing the locks click on the doors of cars. That happens to me—at least before I was a senator. There are very few African Americans who haven't had the experience of getting on an elevator and a woman clutching her purse nervously and holding her breath until she had a chance to get off. That happens often.

And I don't want to exaggerate this, but those sets of experiences inform how the African American community interprets what happened one night in Florida. And it's inescapable for people to bring those experiences to bear. The African American community is also knowledgeable that there is a history of racial disparities in the application of our criminal laws—everything from the death penalty to enforcement of our drug laws. And that ends up having an impact in terms of how people interpret the case.¹⁸⁰

¹⁸⁰ Barack Obama, "July 19, 2013: Remarks on Trayvon Martin," Miller Center, May 4, 2017, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/july-19-2013-remarks-trayvon-martin>.

I acknowledge that the idea that empathy is the motive for Black professionals' show of concern when witnessing the others' injustice has several rebuttals. As Frazier addresses the behavior of the self-hating Black person, he writes, "While pretending to be proud of being a Negro, they ridicule Negroid physical characteristics and seek to modify or efface them as much as possible."¹⁸¹ He continues this thought, "They talk condescendingly of Africans and of African culture, often even objecting to African sculpture in their homes. They are insulted if they are identified with Africans. They refuse to join organizations that are interested in Africa."¹⁸² He continues to lambast their self-hatred as he writes, "...nothing pleases them more than to be mistaken for a Puerto Rican, Philippino, Egyptian or Arab or any ethnic group other than Negro."¹⁸³ Frazier's reasoning for their appearance of sympathy or empathy in cases of injustice is fear. He introduces his thoughts on Black self-hatred by pointing out, "One of the chief frustrations of the middle-class Negro is that he cannot escape identification with the Negro race and consequently is subject to the contempt of whites."¹⁸⁴

Lawrence Graham references this existential emotional paradox when he states,

One can find both pride and guilt among the Black elite. A pride in Black accomplishment that is inexorably tied to a lingering resentment about our past as poor, enslaved Blacks and our past and current treatment by whites. On one level, there are those of us who understand our obligation to work toward equality for all and to use our success in order to assist those Black who are less advantaged. But on another level, there are those of us who buy into the theories of superiority, and who feel embarrassed by our less accomplished Black brethren. These self-conscious individuals are resentful of any quality or characteristic that associates them with that which seems ordinary.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸¹ Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie*, 226

¹⁸² Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie*, 226-227

¹⁸³ Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie*, 226-227.

¹⁸⁴ Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie*, 224.

¹⁸⁵ Graham, *Our Kind of People*, 18.

He maintains his honesty, writing, “We’ve got some of the best-educated, most accomplished, and most talented people in the Black community—but at the same time, we have some of the most hidebound and smug.”¹⁸⁶ Frazier and Graham wrote these words decades ago. Sadly, some still embody the problematic views and self-hate they highlighted. Gladly, as displayed through Obama’s words, the passing of time has allowed many Black professionals to see their predecessors’ folly and embrace a more familial mindset regarding the whole of Black people. Although a common declaration of Black people over the past few years has been “Black people are not a monolith,” a phrase recognizing that all Black experiences are not the same, it does not mean that we do not share one another’s experiences. Black people may recognize their cultural differences in each other, but as Cose’s quote of Mayor Dinkins testifies, other people often see us as the same. Steve Alexander Jr. confirms this in an online *Psychology Today* article entitled “Black People Are Not A Monolith.” He confesses,

As a clinician, this is a constant reminder for me to work towards understanding my clients. How often might I be making assumptions about my clients—the majority of whom are Black—because they happen to look like me? It is a reminder to delve deeper and gain clarification. Black people are not a monolith. Yes, we share a common experience of racism and systematic oppression in America. However, there is more to everyone’s specific story if you are willing to ask and understand.¹⁸⁷

“Yes, we share a common experience of racism and systematic oppression in America” is the common thread that many Black professionals identify as the base hem that stitches together the impoverished and affluent.

¹⁸⁶ Graham, *Our Kind of People*, 18.

¹⁸⁷ Steve Alexander, “Black People Are Not a Monolith,” *Psychology Today*, accessed October 14, 2021. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/opening-the-door/202101/black-people-are-not-monolith>.

It is this culturally evolved group that I focus on when examining the need to have their communal concerns acknowledged. These Black professionals were molded by a culture that provided influences like Tupac Shakur's "Keep Your Head Up," where he poetically penned,

Some say the blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice/ I say the darker the flesh
then the deeper the roots/ I give a holla to my sisters on welfare/ 2Pac cares, if
don't nobody else care/ And, I know they like to beat you down a lot/ When you
come around the block, brothers clown a lot/ But please don't cry, dry your eyes,
never let up/ Forgive but don't forget, girl, keep your head up.¹⁸⁸

Many more musical, cultural, political, and educational messages of the same theme have allowed these generations to grow the self-awareness that Michael Eric Dyson displays in *Tears We Cannot Stop, A Sermon to White America*. Addressing white people's use of Black-on-Black crime as a deflection to not address the poor treatment of Blacks by police, Dyson harangues apologists of state-sanctioned killings. He proclaims, "Beloved, I must admit that there are ways that Black folk do aim hate at each other, ways we do rip each other apart. A lot of it has to do with how we've taken into our minds and souls the poisonous bigotry you've spread. It's brutal and agonizing to watch, especially because we are imitating the hate for Blackness, for 'otherness,' that you taught us."¹⁸⁹ Dyson painful admits that Black people could make a better effort to embrace one another but does so by turning the proverbial mirror on the people and culture that have historically planted, watered, and nourished Black people's hateful behavior.

There must be a goal to provide comfort to the Black professionals who see the community as one and teach those who may harbor some misguided prejudice. With the

¹⁸⁸ Tupac Shakur, *Keep Your Head Up*, CD (New York, Interscope, 1993).

¹⁸⁹ Michael Eric Dyson, *Tears We Cannot Stop: A Sermon to White America* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2017), 151-2.

belief that the community is one, the pain of watching people who could be their sons and daughters, sisters and brothers, or mothers and fathers be treated unjustly, is a heavy burden. Additionally, having that pain be seen as facetious because of socio-economic distance crudely corrals people into silent grief.

Financial and Political Inequality

*“We as a nation have avoided contemplating remedies because we’ve indulged in the comfortable delusion that our segregation has not resulted primarily from state action and so, we conclude, there is not much we are required to do about it. Because once entrenched, segregation is difficult to reverse, the easiest course is to ignore it.” – Richard Rothstein*¹⁹⁰

To acknowledge Black professionals’ struggles also means to recognize their concern to be involved in and witness progressive financial efforts for the community. Due to many Black professionals’ exposure to economic conversations of higher literacy, they often have an interest in—and many times an understanding of—economics. In the project survey, when asked what areas did the participant wish the Black Church paid more attention, one answer listed “financial empowerment opportunities,” one listed “educating our community regarding career, and job opportunities, entrepreneurship and higher education,” one said “minority businesses,” and another said “corporate giving opportunities and partnerships.”¹⁹¹ When the participant who answered “corporate giving opportunities and partnerships” was interviewed and asked to clarify, they mentioned that they felt that Black Churches should develop relationships with corporations to take

¹⁹⁰ Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*. New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2017.

¹⁹¹ Appendix C. Short answer questions.

advantage of grants, getting companies to financially match donations, and the like.¹⁹²

Regardless of these suggestions' feasibility, these answers reflect the participants' financial literacy and desire for financial empowerment. First Baptist intentionally created a financial futures committee to economically look ahead and attract the involvement of our financially skilled professionals.

Along with education, exposure, and experience, the Black professional—regardless of their economic placement in society—becomes aware of the political and socio-economic pitfalls for the Black community. One Sunday at First Baptist, a large family attended the service as the concluding gathering of their family reunion. As they were exiting the sanctuary, I ended up in a casual conversation with a physician in his forties. Interested in his opinions about the Church and our worship style, I asked him if he had any suggestions. He mentioned that he would like to see more women in leadership (our women leaders were not active that Sunday) and then he mentioned that I should read *The Color of Money* by Mehrsa Baradaran. I took note and asked if there is anything on which he specifically wanted me to focus. He did not. Through this dialogue, it seemed that he felt that as the leader of an institution who has the ear of Black people, the pastor should educate themselves on the economic issues and spend more time educating members. Similarly, a former colleague who published a book focusing on Blacks and finance and gone on to log some impressive successes in Black economics offered to talk to First Baptist in the early days of the book's release. Again, he believed that Black people need to know more about economics and that Church was a great place to institute financial education.

¹⁹² Appendix D, Interview 6

The Black Tax by Shawn D. Rochester, *Think and Grow Rich a Black Choice* by Dennis Kimbro, *The Color of Law* by Richard Rothstein, and *The Color of Money* are all books that Black professionals suggested to me multiple times due to their focus on finance and economics. From Frazier's commentary in *Black Bourgeoise*, which provides direct attention to the Black middle class's proud naivety concerning their economic status and understanding, to *The Color of Money* by Baradaran, which establishes that the hinderance to Black economic growth over the years is about much more than passing the responsibility to the Black banks, it is clear that any discussion a church has about appealing to the Black professional requires not only knowledge of Black economics but also an acknowledgment of Black economic concerns.

Knowledge about unjust laws and policies, as discussed in *The Color of Law*, are also often introduced in conversations with Black professionals. The creation and sustainment of an unfair system that mendaciously claims equality is intensely upsetting for the upwardly mobile professional. Whether this is due to the realization that they may personally hit a glass ceiling because the meritocracy they thought existed does not, or because they are concerned for all who work for success and are destined to be hindered, more knowledge of the system itself is desired. Although many have denied over the years that there are limits to what can be achieved in this country by someone who simply "works hard," through conversations I have noticed an increasing acceptance among Black professionals that there are undoubtably systematic biases.

For the Black Church, awareness of these economic conversations are about more than money or upward mobility. Many Black professionals are also aware that the economics in this country underlie the prison system, which houses and works an

inordinately numerous amounts of Black people throughout the United States. Black professionals' engagement in this topic is epitomized in the popularity of books such as the best-selling, highly praised, *The New Jim Crow, Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander. She addresses the issue of the denial of the oppressive prison industrial complex and its effect on Black people. She writes, "Dealing with this system on its own terms is complicated by the problem of denial. Few Americans today recognize mass incarceration for what it is: a new caste system thinly veiled by the cloak of colorblindness." She continues, "Our collective denial is not merely an inconvenient fact; it is a major stumbling block to public understanding of the role of race in our society, and it sharply limits the opportunities for truly transformative collective action."¹⁹³

The success of James Foreman's best-selling Pulitzer Prize winning book, *Locking Up Our Own*, also shows the increase in awareness. Foreman, who aims to carefully address Black people's unknowing assistance in helping mass incarceration's success, came to First Baptist some years ago for a talk-back hosted by the men's ministry (as a favor to a veteran who served with Foreman's father). Although there were not many attendees who represented the thirty-five to fifty-year-old Black professional demographic, the few in attendance not only asked most of the questions, but also showed the most curiosity about First Baptist after the event.

Over the last few decades, several societal developments have influenced Black professionals' culture toward socio-economic knowledge, cultural pride, and action against systemic and systematic injustice. It is no secret that the presidency of Barack

¹⁹³ Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: New Press, 2012), 223.

Obama and the activity of First Lady Michelle Obama swayed many people's political interest. The subsequent election of Donald Trump and four years of sociopolitical drama that ensued further concretized that interest. The 2016 opening of The Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture and the unveiling of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Monument in 2011 added to learning history and fighting racism in all facets. Lin-Manuel Miranda's diverse Broadway depiction of the life of Alexander Hamilton and Beyoncé's love letter to Black women—her *Lemonade* album—and her unique single-handed elevation of Historically Black Colleges and Universities in her Coachella performance turned movie, *Homecoming*; signaled that conformation to the stories of the white majority was not as obligatory as previously thought. Ava DuVernay's *Selma*; the astounding theatrical success of Marvel's *Black Panther*; Jordan Peele's acclaimed *Get Out* and *Us*; *Judas and the Black Messiah* that examines the assassination of Fred Hampton; televised cultural cornerstones such as *Lovecraft Country*, *Watchmen*, *Atlanta*, *Insecure*, *Black-ish*; Oprah Winfrey's shift from talk-show host to Network Owner; and Tyler Perry's seeming monopolistic dominance of Black television and ownership of his own studio; informed people that Black culture and stories deserved respect culturally and economically. To genuinely attract Black professionals who are empowered and impassioned by these influences and experiences, they must know that the Black Church not only acknowledges these economic and political concerns but they are also actively being addressing and further exploring them. Many of them feel like James Baldwin when he wrote to his nephew *The Fire Next Time*, "You know and I know, that the country is celebrating one hundred years of freedom one

hundred years too soon. We cannot be free until they are free.”¹⁹⁴ As in all cultures, there are those who only concern themselves with their personal profit and success. Still, like that physician who visited First Baptist, many Black professionals know that their singular gain means very little if the community is dealing with massive loss.

Recognition of Black Women

“... *I’m guided by Fanny Lou Hammer. I’m guided by the legacies of Harriet Tubman. This ain’t nothing. We ain’t picking cotton, not yet*”¹⁹⁵

To try and address Black professionals’ societal struggles without recognizing Black women’s struggles would be dishonest and a gross neglect of the project. Black women, who, according to Pew Research’s 2014 study, practice their faith, attend church, and participate more in church than Black men,¹⁹⁶ comprise the majority of Black professionals in the Church. The contributions of Black women in the Black Church and in the professional world demand that unique attention be given to discussing not only their societal struggles, but also potential ways that the Black Church can respectfully acknowledge, help eliminate, and provide aid when necessary.

To regulate the issues that Black professional women face to a subset of this research would be insulting. Therefore, the following is not an attempt to justly examine their conflicts and oppressive obstacles. I am neither qualified nor do the constraints of this project allow the attention it deserves. The following is an acknowledgement, not

¹⁹⁴ James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (New York: Vintage International, 1993), 10.

¹⁹⁵ Roberts, Mayo, and Thomas, *Race, Work, and Leadership*, 261.

¹⁹⁶ Kiana Cox and Jeff Diamant, “Black Men Less Religious than Black Women, but More Religious than White Women, Men,” *Pew Research Center* (September 10, 2020), <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/09/26/black-men-are-less-religious-than-black-women-but-more-religious-than-white-women-and-men/>.

only of some of their struggles that are dismissed by the masses, but also of the absolute reality that there is no way to have a conversation about educated professional Black people without starting with women. Moreover, because of the breadth of issues that Black women face, the following only aims to spotlight some the ones that the Church can directly address.

Out-educating,¹⁹⁷ and many times outworking, their gender and racial counterparts, Black women have led the charge against inequality in this country, and yet still do not receive recognition. Tawana Davis pens in her *Race, Work, and Leadership* chapter, “The Transformational Impact of Black Women/Womanist Theologians Leading Intergroup Dialogue in Liberation Work of the Oppressed and the Oppressor,”

For years Black women have been erased from sacred texts, leadership in the history of the movement for Black lives, and current leadership positions in religious, secular, and communal organizations. Our voices have been silenced. Our presence has been marginalized. Our impactful, transforming, and liberating work has been co-opted by others. It is time to document the transformational impact of Black women leaders as we are in the history-in-the-making movement for Black lives.¹⁹⁸

Davis states in that same chapter,

We are living in a world in which women are emerging from the shadows, from behind the veil, from the engine that drives this country’s, this world’s, survival. Out from the shadows as ghost writers, silent organizers, reclaiming voice, agency, capacity, and power. This is a journey of Black girl magic and Black woman mysticism as the driving force for liberation for all through a Black lens of fem divine, spirituality, intellect, resilience, intersectionality, hope, courage, self-love, self-care, and Power divine.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ Richard V. Reeves and Katherine Guyot. “Black Women Are Earning More College Degrees, but That Alone Won’t Close Race Gaps,” *Brookings* (January 31, 2020), <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/social-mobility-memos/2017/12/04/black-women-are-earning-more-college-degrees-but-that-alone-wont-close-race-gaps/>.

¹⁹⁸ Roberts, Mayo, and Thomas, *Race, Work, and Leadership*, 280.

¹⁹⁹ Roberts, Mayo, and Thomas, *Race, Work, and Leadership*, 279.

Tarana Burke, an exemplification of the journey Davis describes, without societal permission, shirked the role of the timid victim and boldly stepped forward with cause. When Burke began saying “Me too,” highlighting the burden of women of color who were sexually abused, along with solidarity with other victims, she was also fighting for recognition of Black women’s issues. In 2015, the social movement #SayHerName developed from Black women fighting to have hidden cases of police brutality against Black women recognized. These focused efforts continue a long tradition of Black women serving as the vanguard advancing against an army no one else wants to fight. As Mitzi Smith writes in *Womanist Sass and Talk Back*,

Black women’s proto-womanism was seldom televised or legitimized, except, for example, in writing their autobiographies. Yet, Black women have always been improvising and creating as well as resisting slavery, lynching, disenfranchisement, racism, sexism, classism, sexual violence, and other oppressions inflicted upon Black women, the Black community, and others.²⁰⁰

To not acknowledge Black women’s struggle when they are spearheading others’ acknowledgement cannot be considered gross negligence. It must be considered an intentional affront and attempt to keep them marginalized and obscured. Not only must it be considered such but Black women see it as such and are vehemently opposing it.

Black women’s societal contributions beyond social justice must also be recognized. To look in the face of a Black professional woman with all her experiences and history and not recognize her invaluable presence to society is denigration. With so many Black women serving as what Davis called “ghost writers” for celebrated men, the continued dismissal of Black women’s significance aims to sociologically perpetuate the

²⁰⁰ Smith, *Womanist Sass and Talk Back*, 30.

antebellum norm of only using Black women to breed something of benefit to men. Our Churches have been as guilty of this practice as any other institution, if not more.

Most of us recognize that although the men may be the public skin of the Black Church, over-represented in leadership positions, women are the muscles, bones, internal organs, sinew, nerves, and everything else that allows the body to function.²⁰¹ Sadly, as with the internal organs of the body, women are kept hidden from recognition. Davis's poetic announcement of Black women's social, political, and economic arrival should serve as an indicator to Churches that they may need to adjust sexist and outdated practices. The Black Church must be reminded that its pews are full of women it has marginalized.

However, to recognize their strength and capability without acknowledging the harm the Church has done rings absurdly insincere. It was this absurdity that led me to intentionally ask the women on my site team to talk with me about what I need to realize, consider, and learn if I am going to attract professional women. They offered great suggestions regarding teaching and approaches. They also informed me about some desires that they have in the Church. They wanted a stronger women's ministry, more women-centric programs, more women in visible leadership, more women's voices, an effort to dismantle patriarchy, and to continue the conversation that I was having with them. Through the dialogue and suggestions, it was clear that although they were accustomed to serving a supporting role, they clearly understood their value. As with Katherine Goble Johnson, Dorothy Vaughn, and Mary Jackson, indispensably offering their intelligence to the success of the United States in the "space race" just to be

²⁰¹ Appendix E, Interview 3.

generally unknown, the Black Church does the same with the elevation of men and its “and-we-couldn’t-have-done-this-withouts” to women. To attract Black professionals, the Church must embrace Black women’s input, talent, and experience rather than continue using them.

Society and the Black Church have also perpetuated Black women’s oversexualization and desexualization. While society carries on the slave-based tradition of partitioning women into either the evil and seductive Jezebel that entices the innocent man or the desexed mammy who is the docile servant, professional Black Women who have no desire to placate those with archaic and oppressive views have either removed themselves from those restrictive environments or launched a fight against them. From the onset of her book, *Hope in the Holler*, A. Elaine Brown Crawford establishes the sexualization of Black women. She writes:

Chattel slavery was a crucible of oppression of Black women’s bodies. The primal Holler of Black foremothers is a resounding communal lament in the soul of African American women. The sexual and physical exploitation of Black bodies that occurred in slavery influenced the treatment of Black women during the emancipation and contemporary periods.²⁰²

Kelly Brown Douglas discusses this oppressive anachronism and clearly tracks its arrival to the modern day. She references the 1965 report on the “Negro Family” by Daniel P. Moynihan that painted the matriarch as the woman who runs the house leaving no room for the Black man to be a man and the welfare queen who is best for breeding children.²⁰³ She shows its effects on the Black Church today when she writes, “The manner in which Black women are treated in many Black churches reflects the Western

²⁰² A. Elaine Brown Crawford, *Hope in the Holler: A Womanist Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002) 1.

²⁰³ Douglas, *Sexuality and The Black Church*, 41-59.

Christian tradition's notion of women as evil and its notions of Black women as Jezebels and seducers of men."²⁰⁴ As examples, Douglas highlights the *de facto* (and sometimes *de jure*) covering of a woman's legs while in the pew and how many churches ostracize unwed mothers. Black professional women with their jobs, income, authority, responsibility, and knowledge, must operate daily in a world that imposes these antiquated and racist expectations on them. For the Church, recognizing Black women includes recognizing what it continues to do *to* Black women. furthermore, recognition implies more than seeing or identifying; it implies an understanding. And if it implies understanding, what kind of person understands that their behavior is harming someone, and does nothing to rectify it? For the sake of this research, the answer is simple. The kind of person who harms someone and does nothing to rectify it is someone who doesn't care about attracting the person they are harming. Ultimately, without changing its harmful practices, instead of refuge and concern for issues, the Church becomes inhospitable and exposes them to more harm.

Along with these other concerns, Black professional women must also face stereotyping when they employ their God-given agency as a human being. The moniker, "angry black woman" is always a whisper away whenever a Black woman decides not to behave as a subordinate or when she shows her frustration. Although these behaviors are perfectly acceptable for men and designated differently for women of different cultures, this specific slight seems to remain in circulation for the purpose of shaming Black women into passivity. Many in society seem to struggle with keeping their composure and not retreating when confronted with the boldness of a passionate Black women.

²⁰⁴ Douglas, *Sexuality and The Black Church*, 83.

Therefore, it aims to quieten them down. This is one reason why Rep. Maxine Waters's 2017 refusal to allow Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin to stall while he was supposed to answer questions of accountability went viral. Christine Emba explains why Waters's phrase, "reclaiming my time," and specifically her confidence, was so engaging to Black women. In Emba's opinion piece for the *Washington Post* entitled, "'Reclaiming My Time' is Bigger than Maxine Waters" she writes, "And for many women and people of color, the phrase 'reclaiming my time' felt particularly poignant, with the idea of reclamation specifically speaking to both the present and the past. Society has been wasting not only their time but also their voices, agency and potential — for years."²⁰⁵ Developing relationships with and involving Black professional women means that the Church must acknowledge their experience and contributions with the same respect as men.

In her book *Fist and Fire*, Leslé Honoré, punches poetically in the opening of her poem, "brown girl, brown girl," "brown girl, brown girl/what do you see/i (sic) see a world that thinks/it's better than me."²⁰⁶ To recognize Black women requires an ability to allow them to operate as fully functional humans without casting insults to make us more comfortable. Kecia Thomas, Aspen J. Robinson, Laura Provolt, and B. Lindsay Brown, in their chapter "When Black Leaders Leave, Costs and Consequences," from *Race Work and Leadership*, directly address the intentional shrinking of Black women in professional spaces. They conclude from their study that "Black women in the early

²⁰⁵ Christine Emba, "'Reclaiming My Time' Is Bigger than Maxine Waters," *Chicago Tribune* (December 18, 2018), <https://www.chicagotribune.com/lifestyles/ct-reclaiming-my-time-maxine-waters-20171228-story.html>.

²⁰⁶ Leslé Honoré, *Fist & Fire: Poems to Inspire Action and Ignite Passion* (Chicago: Tacos and Gumbo Productions, 2017), 217.

stages of their careers who may be seen as token Blacks in their workplaces often experience treatment that undermines their position as competent professionals. They are instead treated as pets, heavily monitored and looked after by higher-status majority-group members in the organization.”²⁰⁷ They continue, “Black women who reject or shed this pet identity and make the decision to remain in their organization are then likely to be perceived as threatening.”²⁰⁸ As they address Black women’s inability to be their whole selves, they conclude “Thus, traits that are typically revered, such as resilience and perseverance through hardship, can backfire for Black women.”²⁰⁹

We must also acknowledge Black women’s health concerns. Although women in this country are still fighting for basic equality and rights regarding women’s health issues, Black women have their own unique concerns. Although all women must deal with concerns regarding agency over their bodies, Black women must also consider the complicated relationship that they have with healthcare. One does not have to go back through the shameful history found in Harriet A. Washington’s *Medical Apartheid* to find the root of Black women’s concerns. In 2019, *Harvard Public Health* ran an article by Amy Roeder entitled, “America is Failing Its Black Mothers.” The article directly dealt with Black mothers’ high mortality rate during childbirth. Roeder writes,

Put simply, for black women far more than for white women, giving birth can amount to a death sentence. African American women are three to four times more likely to die during or after delivery than are white women. According to the World Health Organization, their odds of surviving childbirth are comparable to those of women in countries such as Mexico and Uzbekistan, where significant proportions of the population live in poverty.²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ Roberts, Mayo, and Thomas, *Race, Work, and Leadership*, 344.

²⁰⁸ Roberts, Mayo, and Thomas, *Race, Work, and Leadership*, 344.

²⁰⁹ Roberts, Mayo, and Thomas, *Race, Work, and Leadership*, 344.

²¹⁰ Amy Roeder, “America Is Failing Its Black Mothers,” *Harvard Public Health Magazine*, June 10, 2020, https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/magazine/magazine_article/america-is-failing-its-black-mothers/.

She quotes the chief medical director of Planned Parenthood Federation of America:

“You can’t educate your way out of this problem. You can’t health-care-access your way out of this problem. There’s something inherently wrong with the system that’s not valuing the lives of black women equally to white women.”²¹¹

Not only is death during childbirth a relevant concern but so is breast and ovarian cancer. The Breast Cancer Research Foundation’s 2016 article, “Why Black Women Are More Likely to Die from Breast Cancer” by Marc Hurlbert reads, “Together, these data suggest that differences in access to public health systems, and hence, differences in access to—and quality of mammography and treatment are likely contributing to the problem.”²¹² Hurlbert continues,

Access to care is not the only factor that may be involved. It has been well documented that the biology of the tumor can play a role in both incidence and outcome of breast cancer. For example, black women in the U.S. have been shown to be diagnosed with breast cancer at earlier ages, and a higher percentage are diagnosed with an aggressive form of the disease called triple-negative breast cancer. However, biology alone cannot explain the rapid growth of the disparity in 10 years, and the geographic variation.²¹³

The National Cancer Institute said about the racial disparity in ovarian cancer,

...between 1975 and 2016, the 5-year relative survival rate for ovarian cancer increased from 33% to 48% among non-Hispanic White women but decreased from 44% to 41% in African-American women.

Potential reasons for this disparity have been suggested by previous studies. Researchers involved in two of the new studies have previously found, for example, that African-American women were more likely than non-Hispanic White women to have a reduction in the dose of chemotherapy, a delay in treatment, and early discontinuation of therapy.²¹⁴

²¹¹ Roeder, “America Is Failing Its Black Mothers”.

²¹² Marc Hurlbert, “Why Black Women Are More Likely to Die of Breast Cancer,” Breast Cancer Research Foundation, accessed October 14, 2021, <https://www.bcrf.org/blog/why-black-women-are-more-likely-die-breast-cancer/>.

²¹³ Hurlbert, “Why Black Women Are More Likely to Die of Breast Cancer”.

²¹⁴ “Ovarian Cancer Studies Aim to Reduce Racial Disparities,” National Cancer Institute, accessed October 14, 2021, <https://www.cancer.gov/news-events/cancer-currents-blog/2020/ovarian-cancer-racial-disparities-studies>.

These health concerns listed, along with numerous others including mental health, are relevant, life-concerning, issues that Black professional women must confront regularly.

To attract Black professionals, Black professional women's needs must be addressed. For the Black Church, this first requires contrition. Its contributions to sexism, misogyny, weaponization of patriarchal theology, and at times, emotional, mental, and sexual abuse must be acknowledged. Only then can recognition of their ability, talent, and contributions be sincerely given. With a foundation of repentance and willingness to work toward allowing Church to truly be sanctuary for all, then actions to create equality in the Church, implementation of programs and ministries to address the issues previously listed, and true relationship building can begin.

Pandemic Health Concerns

There is no way to discuss sociological issues that Black professionals need acknowledged without addressing pandemic health concerns. The pandemic has driven health, safety, and grief higher on the communal priority list. With the unfathomable amount of death that has occurred since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, many Black professionals, whether lenient or strict in their safety measures, understand the need for heightened health practices. It has been thoroughly reported that Black people have suffered more severe illness and death from COVID-19 than white people.²¹⁵ For similar reasons as those previously listed concerning Black women's issues, Black people cannot ignore that their risk requires heightened knowledge and intelligent decision-making regarding their health.

²¹⁵ Sherita Hill Golden, "Coronavirus in African Americans and Other People of Color," Johns Hopkins Medicine, accessed October 14, 2021, <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/covid19-racial-disparities>.

Black professionals must know that their concerns about the community's health is recognized. However, they also must know that their suspicions about treatments are also acknowledged and addressed. This is a demographic that may not be as skeptical as some, yet is still knowledgeable of the historical mistreatment and experimentation of Black people in this country. Many are aware of the unauthorized use of Henrietta Lack's cells, which were the first cells to be cloned and are still being reproduced today. According to Johns Hopkins Medicine, "Over the past several decades, this cell line has contributed to many medical breakthroughs, from research on the effects of zero gravity in outer space and the development of the polio vaccine, to the study of leukemia, the AIDS virus and cancer worldwide."²¹⁶ Moreover, many are also aware of the long documented Tuskegee Experiments that intentionally withheld penicillin from Black men with syphilis so they could continue experimentation, radiation experiments, controlling Black reproduction, experimentation on Black prisoners, and so on.

Sadly, much of this country's ignorant expectation of Black people to openly run to the vaccine and treatment without questions led to contention between government and the Black community. This was modeled through the clumsily fumbled September 2020 effort of Connecticut's governor to get the Black community vaccinated by asking Black Churches to lead support for the vaccine.²¹⁷ To ask the Black Church to be the first ones to embrace the vaccine was "tone-deaf." Although the motive could have been genuine, to slow the disproportionately high infection and death rates from COVID-19 in the Black

²¹⁶ Benjamin Butanis, "The Importance of Hela Cells," Johns Hopkins Medicine, April 11, 2017, <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/henriettalacks/importance-of-hela-cells.html>.

²¹⁷ Office of Gov. Ned Lamont, "Conn. Governor Skewered for Suggesting Black Churches Should Lead Support for COVID-19 Vaccine," *The Christian Post*, accessed October 14, 2021, <https://www.christianpost.com/news/conn-governor-skewered-for-suggesting-black-churches-should-lead-support-for-covid-19-vaccine.html>.

community, the method showed that Black concerns and skepticism were not considered. To attract Black professionals, their perceived intelligence, education, ability, and agency should be respected. Therefore, programs like COVID-19 informationals and workshops should be considered. However, as highlighted when examining Black professionals' desire for service, offering masks, COVID-19 tests, and vaccines inform them that there is relevance and awareness in the faith community.

COVID-19 discussions also bring concomitant conversations of regular health concerns. Black professionals are still aware that cancer, heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, and more are all issues that need to be monitored for themselves and their loved ones. Moreover, they are aware that if someone were to become sick or die, managing care or arrangements during the pandemic is complicated. Even without specified data, it is still safe to presume that knowledge of how to remain safe and keep loved ones safe, along with mental health tools to process the loss of life and lifestyles, have become more desired with each new case. Any organization looking to attract, develop relationships with, and involve Black Christian professionals, as this project aimed to do, must realize the importance of Black health and aim to educate and converse about these topics. As Harriet Washington beseeches in *Medical Apartheid*,

African American and other health organizations must continue and expand the word of these pivotal groups, and much of this can be done close to home, through church health fairs, social organizations, and community activism.

I challenge African Americans to bring medica-research education to the fore of the American health agenda.²¹⁸

To accept Washington's challenge is also ministry to the Black community. The Church's effort to offer information; host health functions; embrace awareness of cancer,

²¹⁸ Harriet A. Washington, *Medical Apartheid: A Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Anchor Books, 2008), 403.

high blood pressure, diabetes, and other conditions that plague the Black community; inform and suggest how to eat healthier; host or suggest fitness routines or classes; and the like all signal to Black professionals that their concerns are the Church's concerns.

Personal Concerns

This subsection requires no compendia like those of previous sections. Like Black women's issues, this section could be a stand-alone research topic. However, the aim is to simply acknowledge the reality of these burdens. When considering the Black professional's emotional and mental stress, an individual's concerns cannot be omitted. Ellis Cose lists what he calls "the dozen demons," which are twelve things that will always be one of the reasons that a Black professional is irked. He lists: (1) an inability to fit in, (2) exclusion from the club, (3) low expectations, (4) shattered hopes, (5) faint praise, (6) presumption of failure (7) coping fatigue, (8) pigeonholing, (9) identity troubles, (10) self-censorship and silence, (11) mendacity, and (12) guilt by association.²¹⁹ In reality, there are obviously many more than twelve (potentially an unlimited number). Cose's list focuses on some of the professional concerns but it is common knowledge that like anyone else, family issues, social tension, mental health concerns, emotional struggles, accepted or ignored addictions, financial woes, loneliness, and more torment many professionals.

As with the other categories of concerns, there is a need to have these personal struggles acknowledged and recognized. Some find this recognition through counselling, workshops, time with friends, and what some consider "escapes." Regardless of how people cope with these struggles, the fact that many cope through having conversations or

²¹⁹ Cose, *The Rage of A Privileged Class*, 53-72.

embracing community support highlight that they must have their concerns acknowledged.

Desire for Community

Community is, and has always been, sociologically significant for Black people. In the immediate post-antebellum south, there was safety and a higher chance of social success in numbers. Although that is still the case in many areas of this country, other reasons have also rotated in and out of priority. Gregory Ellison writes about the power of community in *Cut Dead But Still Alive*, "...if talking is revelatory and identity-forming, then communities who can hear the authentic, uncut stories of others nonjudgmentally have the power to bolster self-esteem and aid in the gestation of hope."²²⁰ An increase of hope, self-esteem in the face of contention, finding cultural familiarity in a foreign place, having a village in which to raise children, human need for companionship, and even the simple desire to find familiar cuisine all are reasons why Black people aim to be around one another. If the intent is to develop relationships, then the Black Church must recognize and contribute to the professional's need for community.

The 2019 U.S Census reported that 13.4 percent of the population is Black. According to a 2019 Brookings study, only 12 percent of the middle-class in the United States is Black. A 2017 study of Black men from the Institute of Family Studies documents that 2.5 percent of Black men are upper class.²²¹ None of this means that all professionals are considered middle or upper-class or that all Black middle and upper-

²²⁰ Gregory C. Ellison II. *Cut Dead but Still Alive: Caring For African American Young Men* (Nashville, 2013), 148.

²²¹ W. Bradford Wilcox, Ronald B. Mincy, and Wendy Wang, "2.5 Million Black Men Are in the Upper Class," Institute for Family Studies, accessed October 15, 2021, <https://ifstudies.org/blog/2-5-million-black-men-are-in-the-upper-class>.

class are professionals. However, it establishes the truism that Black professionals in this country are a small minority. When considering that the majority of Black middle class as of 2017 lived primarily in the south and mid-Atlantic²²² and according to the location of wealthy Black neighborhoods, the majority Black upper class is presumed to be located in the northeast and south, for the Black professional, physically finding community relationships with people of similar socio-cultural and economic experiences can be very difficult. At the risk of being superfluous, the following specifies a few of these socio-cultural experiences.

Many Black professionals have knowledge, interpretations, and understanding of cultural history that is not shared by all, many times even their own peers. Some are more informed on U.S. Black history, some are more knowledgeable on politics and legislations, some are aware of diasporic treatment and history around the world, and so on. Difference in comedic tastes, preferences of entertainment, hobbies, marital status, children, education, views on “what Black people need to do,” police accountability, etc., all minimize the cross-section of people who may be considered their community and make the search increasingly difficult. Hence, programs like Jack and Jill for youth, Black Greek Letter Organizations, Social Organizations, Historically Black Colleges and Universities and their alumni chapters, homecomings, Black Churches, local NAACP chapters, etc., all provide options for Black professionals to find people of similar socio-cultural economic foundations and lifestyles.

²²² Andre M. Perry and Carl Romer, “The Black Middle Class Needs Political Attention, Too,” *Brookings* (February 27, 2020), <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-black-middle-class-needs-political-attention-too/>.

Even vacationing, areas like Oak Bluffs, Martha's Vineyard, MA, Sag Harbor, NY, and Highland Beach, MD, provide an opportunity to intentionally find a familiar community for respite.²²³ This intentionality is revealed in discoveries like printed brochures advertising vacation rentals at places like Taylor's Playfair in Oak Bluffs on Martha's Vineyard.²²⁴ The development and sustention of Black social groups for those considered Black professionals speaks to the desire to not live life in a cultural silo but to connect with others. Through experience and observations, many Black professionals also sought community refuge in technology. Group video options, teleconference apps, messaging apps, and social media groups, have united them with other like-minded people that they may have never met physically.

Sadly, many times preferences for community are not met. Once, while listening to the concerns of a transient Black family, they shared how they no longer look for community in the various cities in which they find themselves. They expressed that although they yearn for community, it is so difficult to find someone who culturally connects with them. They felt that it was easier to not search at all. Often, instead of finding a desired community, Black professionals will settle for connecting with someone who shares some commonality. This frequently happens to be commonality on the experience of being Black in the United States. Coates, in his own way, highlights how this specific community connection is built. Speaking through the voice of a Black slave woman taking in an orphaned slave boy, he writes, "You know how I am. You done

²²³ Graham, *Our Kind of People*, 153.

²²⁴ Ouida F. Taylor, "Vacations at Taylor's Playfair," *National Museum of African American History and Culture*, accessed October 15, 2021, https://nmaahc.si.edu/object/nmaahc_2014.112.113?destination=edan-search%2Fcollection_search%3Fpage%3D1%26edan_q%3Dvacation%2520.

heard how they talk about me but you also know something is broken in old Thena, and when I seen you up in that loft, I had a feeling that the same something was broken in you. And you had chosen me, for whatever your young reasoning, you had picked me out.”²²⁵ What Coates imagined, a bond built on commonalities of pain and loneliness, is many Black professionals’ experience. If the Black Church were to be a community of refuge that addresses their needs, then not only would it attract them, develop relationships with, and involve them, but more importantly they could also be served through love and support.

Community Flexibility

When discussing community, the need for flexibility in involvement and physical presence is vital. Black professionals, due to their employment, family, and other social responsibilities, can rarely offer an enormous time commitment to any one community. If it is true that Generation Xers only spend 19 percent of their leisure time with friends and family,²²⁶ then we can deduce that due to responsibilities, Black professional Generation Xers spend less time than that. Similarly with Millennials as the most educated generation, yet working to relieve themselves of high debt rates,²²⁷ we can deduce that Black professional Millennials are also limited in their recreation time. Therefore, whatever they are involved in, even recreational activities, must be accepting of their fluid participation.

Furthermore, the ability to connect with the community while “on-the-move” is preferred. Messenger apps, email, texts, videos, and other techno-communal options are

²²⁵ Coates, *Water Dancer*, 18.

²²⁶ Grimm, *100 Questions and Answers about Gen X*, 60.

²²⁷ Grimm, *100 Questions and Answers about Gen X*, 14–15.

welcome to maintain relationships. To involve professionals and engage them, it is important that their schedule and availability are considered. Use of virtual meeting technology that allows people to attend functions without physically being present and videos and virtual courses that they can access at any time are great tools that can help accommodate their schedule. A church or ministry that does not consider professionals' limitations in their planning will ultimately be disappointed in the lack of involvement.

This is not an exhaustive list of Black professionals' needs; however, it aims to capture the general concerns that are woven through their lives. To seriously commit to attracting, developing relationships with, and involving them requires that these concerns and more are at the forefront when teaching, conversing, managing, and planning.

Should the Church Aim to Address Their Needs?

The focus of this question is whether the Church should attempt the challenge of addressing all of these needs. It was previously mentioned when addressing inspiring sermons that the Church should address their needs. It should address them with the same passion and desire that it has to help the poor, oppressed, elderly, youth, prisoners, homeless, and others we identify as the least of these. This is not implying that all Black Churches should make Black professionals their main priority. Churches have specific missions, unique visions, limited resources and, therefore, limited projects. Yet, Black Christian professionals should not have to wait until they are deemed worthy enough through visible suffering to be served by the Church.

The early church we see in Acts was comprised of the "haves" and "have nots." In the first few chapters, we see development of a fellowship including members who were considered "the least of these" and people with land to sell. Yet, they all sold what they

had so they could all have. All were expected to contribute and all expected to be provided for.²²⁸ The silent truth is the suffocating debt that many professionals have incurred, the income that other people overestimate, the emotional and mental stress rooted in the previously mentioned reasons, family and relationship issues, employment insecurity, internalized guilt of their success that influences silence to their own pain, all hidden by their appearance of “success,” set up Black Christian professionals to be a highly neglected demographic. As with all people in need, the Church should aim to provide what it can.

Conversations and dialogue can come at no cost. Counseling and support can be offered at manageable rates. Loving fellowship and community should be the default at every Church. Should the Church aim to address the needs? If the Church were any other organization, the answer would vary. Since that is not case, the answer is yes.

Organizational Research

At the risk of revisiting the project’s results, I will spend some time using a select portion of the data to discuss leadership.

What kind of leader will Black Christian professionals between the ages of thirty-five and fifty-years old follow?

Due to people working in different places with varied managers and managerial styles, I initially leaned on the Black Christian professionals from my site team to help me research what my target demographic desires in leadership. They started by recommending a few videos and books. Some of these resources also served as leadership development tools for my ministerial competencies, which will be discussed in the next

²²⁸ Acts 2-4.

chapter. However, the main value of these resources was that they provided descriptions of what kind of leader they would follow.

Character and Competence

*“Character refers to the kind of person who acts in a certain way. It focuses on inner realities of the self: motives, intention, attitudes, dispositions. We do not see character directly. We see it in its fruits.” – Richard M. Gula*²²⁹

One of the resources suggested was a 2010 *Ted Talk* from Drew Dudley entitled “Everyday Leadership.” It specifically focused on a leader’s “bad” habit of making the idea of leadership too grand. Dudley believes that leaders spend an enormous amount of time trying to live up to a leadership ideal that is irrationally large. He says, “We’ve made leadership about changing the world, but there is no world, there are only six billion understandings of it.”²³⁰ This perspective directly engenders an interpersonal leadership style.

When asked in the survey “what leadership models do you look for in a leader when making the decision to become a part of an organization overall,” the answers overwhelmingly included honestly, authenticity, integrity, and empathy.²³¹ Although many books still aim to mold managers into detached leaders ruling with an iron fist from an ivory tower, it is clear when dealing with my target demographic that relatability and sincerity is paramount. As mentioned in chapter two, those who fit into Generation X, according to Tim Elmore, “...are often in management by this point,” and want, “freedom to work on my own terms. Don’t babysit me. Don’t micromanage me. They

²²⁹ Richard M. Gula, *Ethics in Pastoral Ministry* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press), 33.

²³⁰ Drew Dudley, *Everyday Leadership*, TED, 2010, https://www.ted.com/talks/drew_dudley_everyday_leadership?language=en#t-331317.

²³¹ Appendix C.

also have a concern for equality and fair treatment.”²³² Furthermore, those who fit into the Millennial demographic are growing into the same mindset with professional advancement. Both groups significantly see their leaders as peers and teammates. Therefore, any behaviors or leadership models that do not foster trust are offensive. Although 36 percent of participants saw the Pastor as “CEO/President,” that must be interpreted through the lens of what a leader looks like to them (which, in part, was previously established). Furthermore, 32 percent of participants saw the Pastor as a partner.²³³ With that perspective, it is safe to conclude that suspicious behavior, bad reputation, lack of transparency, and other qualities that may reflect poor morals or ethics are anathema. Floyd and Elaine Flake, pastoring the twenty-thousand plus member The Greater Allen African Methodist Episcopal Cathedral of New York along with Edwin C. Reed in their book, *African American Church Management Handbook*, list integrity, attitude and demeanor, sense of vision, loving the flock, and spiritual nurturing and self-care, as vital leadership traits for a Pastor.²³⁴

Along with a leader’s individual character, competence is very important. However, for Black leaders, competence is evaluated by more than traditional professional success rubrics. Black leaders and the Black professionals who follow them understand that the ability to successfully manage during strategic crisis is an evaluative metric for competency. Lynn Perry Wooten and Erika Haynes James in “The Glass Cliff, African American CEOs as Crisis Leaders” found, “Beyond preparing for their roles as

²³² Andy Stanley and Tim Elmore, “April 2019: Generational Diversity in the Workplace, Part 1,” Andy Stanley Leadership Podcast, December 4, 2019, <https://andystanley.com/podcast/generational-diversity-in-the-workplace/>.

²³³ Appendix C.

²³⁴ Floyd H. Flake, Elaine McCollins Flake, and Edwin C. Reed, *African American Church Management Handbook* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2005), 33-40.

crisis leaders, the African American CEOs in our study perceived the work of managing crises and unstable situations as not an unusual assignment but rather their responsibility.”²³⁵ They found,

...the appointments of African American CEOs were not explicitly related to “traditional” notions of crises, such as sudden natural disasters or catastrophic events, or smoldering crises such as fraud, labor disputes, or lawsuits. Instead, their appointments were linked to what many be considered a need for the management of strategic crisis, organizational change, corporate turnaround, or industry disrupters.²³⁶

It is common to see many first Black leaders of organizations be selected when the organization is in crisis and then dismissed when they could not stop the organization from regressing. Like a captain being appointed on the Titanic after its collision with the iceberg then relieved of duty because they could not stop the ship from sinking, many Black leaders understand that they are being evaluated on their ability to stop a ship from sinking, to repair the organization ruptured hull, and to make up the time lost during the crisis. Yet, this challenge is not rejected or feared; for many, it is embraced. It is “...not just a risk but also opportunity in crisis – opportunity for their companies and, as important, opportunity for themselves.”²³⁷ These Black professionals hired in crisis and others who will soon be part of their selection pool are part of the target demographic. It is safe to conclude that although they may have some empathy for the challenge of pivoting an organization like a Church, in crisis, they also expect the organization’s leader to make the necessary adjustments. Therefore, we must expand the definition of competency to include what they use as they manage crisis in their fields. According to Wooten and James, this includes organizational agility: thorough knowledge of the

²³⁵ Roberts, Mayo, and Thomas, *Race, Work, and Leadership*, 332.

²³⁶ Roberts, Mayo, and Thomas, *Race, Work, and Leadership*, 330.

²³⁷ Roberts, Mayo, and Thomas, *Race, Work, and Leadership*, 336

business and ability to muster the resources required; resiliency in the face of success or failure, turning either into another opportunity; and being dauntless. These roles are not for the faint of heart.²³⁸

This expanded definition of competency still includes the standard expectations of an understanding of the organization and field, operations, and financial and managerial competency. Some years ago, when I asked several Black professionals for advice on leadership and tools to increase managerial competency, they encouraged reading *The Goal* by Eliyahu M. Goldratt, which is best known for creatively helping the reader understand “bottlenecks,” or constraints, in the manufacturing process. This “must read” was suggested to help increase goal efficiency in whatever area was being managed. *Execution, The Discipline of Getting Things Done* by Larry Bossidy and Ram Charan was suggested to help create “... a specific set of behaviors and techniques that companies need to master in order to have competitive advantage.”²³⁹ Another recommendation was *The First 90 Days* by Michael D. Watkins, which gives advice for those moving into new positions and need to set an operational standard. Although the person who suggested this reading was aware that I was not leading in a liminal space at the time, their suggestion reinforces the professional’s value of transitional leadership ability. Crisis management, organizational competence, managerial skills, financial skills, and the like, unquestionably make the list for a decent business leader. Although many spiritual leaders and their followers partition pastoring into a solely supernatural and clairvoyant role, without question, the rubric above also applies to Church leaders.

²³⁸ Roberts, Mayo, and Thomas, *Race, Work, and Leadership*, 336

²³⁹ Larry Bossidy and Ram Charan, *Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done* (New York: Random House Business, 2009), 7.

Method

The project survey did not significantly detail preferred leadership method. However, 100 percent of participants felt that it was acceptable for the Pastor to use corporate leadership styles and methods as opposed to only using Biblical leadership tools. This does not come as a surprise considering the demographic. Yet it does accentuate the desire for visible organization and structure; the main indication of which is delegation.

When evaluated for ministerial competencies, the site team listed delegation as the primary leadership behavior to enhance. Flake, Flake, and Reed, acknowledging that there is no one right way to manage, write "...you need to develop a system that allows you to delegate responsibility to others without feeling that you must be in control or have the final say in everything. This entails finding the best possible people for the right positions and then granting them authority to make decisions and manage in specific, well-defined areas."²⁴⁰ Professionals who are observing leaders note a few things from people who do not delegate. The obvious result is that leaders must either micromanage or be negligent to the organization's operations. Both create the symptom of operational inefficiency; or, as Goldratt would say, a bottleneck. The more subtle result of a lack of delegation of which professionals are acutely aware is leader burnout. Flake, Flake, and Reed clearly address this when writing, "Delegating will give you more time and energy to focus on what you do best and/or on what you believe is most important. Failing to

²⁴⁰ Flake, Flake, and Reed, *African American Church Management Handbook*, 41.

delegate will likely cause you to have physical, mental, emotional, and even spiritual breakdowns.”²⁴¹

Along with delegation, other welcomed corporate styles of leadership for professionals include team building exercises; vision-planning; job expectations; expected time commitments; evidence of results; clear direction; open communication with the manager; use of the enneagram, Myers Briggs, and other collegial tools; and service recognition.

Due to the reality that people engage Churches for different reasons, it may be possible to initially attract, develop relationships with, and involve the target demographic without embodying the preferred character, competency, and methods. However, we can assume that retaining their presence and commitment may be a problem. To subject professionals to unprofessional leadership and methods creates an environment that may become intolerable. To genuinely accomplish the goal, the leadership’s management skills must be compatible with that of the professionals who they aim to lead.

Expectations of Church Leadership

Although Black Christian Professionals may follow certain leadership traits in secular organizations, there may be unique qualities they desire in a spiritual leader. Influenced by history, culture, relationship, and reputation, the Black Pastor should consider that they need more than business training to lead Black professional Christians. When participants were asked to describe the title that best describes the role of Pastor, 40 percent said “teacher,” 20 percent said “Theologian,” and “Coach,” “Shepherd,” and

²⁴¹ Flake, Flake, and Reed, *African American Church Management Handbook*, 41.

“Other” equally split the rest of the 40 percent.²⁴² This implies that the professionals who participated in the survey expect the Pastor to be an expert in their field of faith and provide that knowledge to congregants. Although other responses show that they are not overly concerned about the Pastor’s educational degrees, their description of “Theologian” and “Teacher” reveal that they expect that the Pastor will have theological knowledge that they do not.

Unlike expectations in the secular world, Black professionals do not judge their spiritual leaders resumé as harshly as their secular leaders. It is safe to presume that a portion of the reason is the same as why the Black Church generally has not strictly reinforced the need for post-graduate education among its leaders: they are not informed enough about theological education to judge what is “good,” “bad,” or “needed.” Another reason is that the Black Church also values things that cannot be found on a curriculum vitae. The ability to inspire, effectively communicate on a cultural level, and speak to needs are all part of teaching and being a theologian that degrees cannot confirm. Many congregants expect what Richard M. Gula asserts in *Ethics in Pastoral Ministry*: “the duty of pastoral ministers is to subordinate self-interest in order to give a greater degree of preference to serving those who seek pastoral service.”²⁴³ Black church congregants, professionals and otherwise, know that character traits like those cannot be reflected as a bullet point on a resumé.

To avoid further recursion of the data from the previous chapter, I will conclude this section with a quote I first saw in *Katie’s Cannon*. Cannon quoted Zora Neale Hurston’s comments to James Weldon Johnson about *New York Times*’ columnist John

²⁴² Appendix C.

²⁴³ Gula, *Ethics in Pastoral Ministry*, 60.

Chamberlin's comments about the power of the Black preacher. Although this specifically references the Black preacher, the unique requirement to have more than a resumé is reflected in her words. Hurston wrote on May 8, 1934, "He means well, I guess, but I never saw such a lack of information about us. It just seems that he is unwilling to believe that a Negro preacher could have so much poetry in him."²⁴⁴ She lauds the Black preacher by writing, "He does not know that merely being a good man is not enough to hold a Negro preacher in an important charge. He must also be an artist. He must be both a poet and an actor of very high order, and then he must have the voice and figure."²⁴⁵

For Black professionals of the target demographic, the impact of the character, competency, method, and expectations of the Pastor are crucial to their decision to offer their time and effort at a specific church. They are used to leadership, and at times, used to leading. Therefore, to follow someone else organizationally and spiritually requires that the person "in charge" seem worthy of their investment.

Clergy and Laity

Originally, I aimed to examine what kind of lay leadership would earn the target demographic's interest. Due to shifts in the project, the focus adjusted to solely examining what kind of pastor or lead minister Black professionals would follow. What that revealed applies in many ways to lay leaders. Many Black professionals have no issues working with others toward a goal; they regularly work in a collegial world. If they are part of a social organization or if they volunteer their time for charitable reasons, more likely than not, they already follow a lay person's leadership. Furthermore, the traits

²⁴⁴ Canon, *Katie's Cannon*, 105

²⁴⁵ Canon, *Katie's Cannon*, 105.

to which they are attracted were already mentioned. Trustworthiness, sincerity, integrity, and direction are most important.

As long as the vision is agreed upon, leadership models that involve delegation, respect of opinions, and respect of time and effort are welcome. This is in no small part because Black professionals already work within lay models and generally desire like-minded companionship and the comfort of working with one another. Roberts, Mayo, and Thomas conclude *Race, Work, and Leadership* with a few summations. While discussing the need for community, they share that “Black leaders develop themselves and affect society through healing connections. Often surrounded by people from diverse racial groups, many current and aspiring Black leaders experience isolation and doubt and yearn for communities in which they can ‘drop the masks...and breathe deeply into their true selves.’”²⁴⁶ There is a desire among many Black professionals to operate in a community that is healing, accepting, and safe. As long as the community is loving and trusted and the leadership is competent and sincere Black professionals should have no issues following the team’s direction. I believe, as the people of Israel followed the lay leader, Nehemiah, in rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem, that professionals will follow loving and competent lay leaders.

I remain confident that for the Black professional, the Church is like a rest stop along a highway, a sanctuary for believers, and repository to be equipped for service. Furthermore, although it would be impossible to uncover all of my target demographic’s needs, I am convinced that the Church should aim to address each one in their power. This is not only for the purpose of attracting, developing relationships with, and

²⁴⁶ Roberts, Mayo, and Thomas, *Race, Work, and Leadership*, 425.

involving them. Yes, that brings great benefits to a Church like First Baptist that is in need of an “anchoring generation.” However, the Church should aim to address their needs because, like other demographics, when the Church addresses the needs of one, other groups also benefit. When the Church addresses the Black professional’s concerns, it creates a sanctuary for all to feel protected from cultural and theological affronts and attacks. Furthermore, through that same understanding, it is equipped to become a place of powerful, relevant, encouraging, and liberating messages. By taking time to understand professional’s unique issues, the Black Church can become a space for honesty and comfort to address the pain and confusion others may not know exists. It can address its demons of misogyny, prejudice, and hate, and move toward embodying true love through Jesus Christ. Finally, by considering their concerns, the Black Church can work toward becoming a model of organization and efficiency. It is this list of reasons why the Black Church should fight to remain the sanctuary it has been, because the need for refuge from an unfair world is always relevant and the need to be equipped to do the spiritual, social, and community work is always there.

CHAPTER FIVE COMPETENCIES

My site team assessed that the competencies that I should continue to develop were leadership, my role as an ecumenist, and my attention to self-care. To develop these areas, I used site team recommendations, connections, and insights in conjunction with what I thought were viable considering ever-changing responsibilities. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, implementation of strategies and evaluation methods required several adjustments. Although not detrimental to this project, the 2020 quarantine and remaining social distancing procedures throughout 2021 required the modification or elimination of all steps that required in-person interaction. Furthermore, as with all Pastors during these unprecedented times, an increase of unfamiliar responsibilities led to other impediments that will be addressed in this chapter.

Leader

As a leader, my site team recognized that to attract professionals I must create an environment and behave in a way that engenders trust in my leadership. It was decided that I needed to work on delegation, setting clear expectations, and showing appreciation. My strategies were: 1) to identify and work directly with a mentor that exhibits strong leadership traits that I would like to foster and utilize my site team to hold me accountable for continuing my meetings, 2) take advantage of five online learning or training platforms such as LinkedIn Learning and podcasts, and 3) to read a minimum of

two books on leadership or about charismatic leaders that lead with characteristics I admire.

In February 2021, I entered one-on-one leadership coaching with Hiram Brett, a former telecommunications executive who now serves as Spiritual Care Coordinator and Chaplin and Emergency Room Chaplin. We met weekly for one hour using virtual meeting software to discuss my identified weak points. In June 2021, we moved to a biweekly schedule. Since September, due to scheduling conflicts, we adopted a *de facto* monthly pattern. In the early months, my site team checked in to confirm that we were meeting. However, checking in eventually became unnecessary as Mr. Brett and I remained committed to our schedule.

As expected, through our meetings, other leadership issues were addressed. One significant revelation was that my lack of delegation and setting clear expectations stemmed from a dearth of preparation time. We agreed that I needed to set aside two hours a week for planning: one hour to be creative and plan for my personal endeavors and another hour to do the same for ministry. Although I can make decisions during impromptu moments, I operate best when I have time to reflect, assess, and formulate. This may be rooted in my artistic inclinations (sketch, paint, write). Nevertheless, it is in these moments that I can develop and plan while having the time to take more things into consideration. When I forego that process, there are always “loose ends” that must be addressed after a decision. As someone who operates best when being creative, allotting time for that purpose proved to be a major aid.

My site team suggested that I also take advantage of online learning or training platforms such as LinkedIn Learning and podcasts. Those with management experience

felt that online tools were very helpful at equipping them with various skills. I also previously benefitted from such management tools in my other professional experiences. I ambitiously decided that I would aim to take advantage of five online learning experiences. Unexpectedly, the pandemic exposed the folly of this ambitiousness. The increase in the amount of time spent pivoting Church ministry delayed the completion of this strategy. However, with courses and podcasts already selected, I still intend to begin and complete them.

If I lacked in the execution of the previous strategy, then I was prolific in reading books about leadership or leaders. To better equip myself to delegate and maintain expectations for staff and volunteers, I read *Execution* by Larry Bossidy and Ram Charan, *The Goal* by Eliyahu Goldratt, *First Break All The Rules* from Gallup, and *The First 90 Days* by Michael Watkins. Both *Execution* and *The First 90 Days* provide detailed suggestions for a leader's behavior and mentality who successfully leads change within organizations in liminal spaces. *The Goal*, considered a classic management-oriented novel, reveals how the manufacturing process's constraints can lead to failure in an organization. One specific aspect that proved beneficial to my leadership perspective was recognizing that "inventories" should never accrue in a warehouse. The implications are if inventories are not distributed, which prevents new inventory from entering, then there is a restriction on profit and a bottleneck of invested resources. This is antithetical to a for-profit business's number one purpose, which is profit. When applied to Church ministry, the investment, time, and effort going into the Church, should always flow freely to those in need through ministry efforts. If they are not shared regularly, then the Church is not operating efficiently to serve its purpose. Moreover, there is no way to

independently control the system to run smoothly and consistently. Delegation must be employed to honor the service mission and ensure that every ministry is moving what it has to offer to those being served. *First Break All the Rules* buttressed the lessons of *The Goal* by examining how great leaders over the years could encourage their teams' best work and effort. These books were helpful in enumerating the various tactics and mindsets that executives use, leading to a better understanding of effective delegation, training, setting expectations, and holding myself accountable.

To equip myself better to lead people in the Church, I also read *Who Moved My Pulpit* by Thom Rainer and *Navigating Pastoral Leadership in the Transition Zone* by D. Darrell Griffin. Both of these books addressed various aspects of leading a Church in or through transition. Whereas *Who Moved My Pulpit* addresses how to steer a church through a transition being implemented by the Pastor, *Navigating Pastoral Leadership in the Transition Zone* provides great insight into leading a Church through transitional moments. Initially, I was not sure if this book would assist me in my leadership development considering that First Baptist was not in any ostensible transition. Yet, when the pandemic arrived, the advice offered, especially concerning helping a Church through moments where they are fatigued with constant changes, proved vital. The application of information from both books guided me toward a leadership model that was relevant for myself and the Church.

In my proposal, I wrote that I would evaluate my success, "... through the completion of my strategies as well as increased successful delegation. A questionnaire will also be provided to my site team and church leadership to determine my progress." The altered Church experience over the past two years has required me to acquire more

responsibilities. Encouragingly, those duties are now being assigned to others. Furthermore, I held several leadership meetings to inform people of my goals and expectations. I also instituted a Director and Assistant Director of Ministry Operations to prevent me from micromanaging minutiae. With the appointment of the Director of Ministry Operations providing tangible delegation evidence, a questionnaire was no longer necessary to determine my progress. Regarding showing appreciation, I intentionally spent five consecutive Sundays allocating time in our service to thank those who contributed to getting the Church through 2020 and successfully into 2021. I have continued to take time at least once a month to show appreciation from the pulpit on Sunday morning.

Ecumenist

My site team recognized that my interaction with other organizations in the city and surrounding towns was minimal. Not only did they identify this through the ministerial competencies assessment, but they also shared with me that they personally would like to see me do more. Therefore, I decided on four strategies: to 1) become more active with local ecumenical and multi-faith councils and events, 2) invite someone from another faith tradition to speak to our congregation about a struggle in their community, 3) build on the foundation laid for structured opportunities for interdenominational and multi-faith actions with other houses of worship in the community, and 4) join a local social club or business organization to reach beyond religious networks.

To become more active with local ecumenical and multi-faith councils and events, I intentionally increased my communication and willingness to assist with our local clergy council. This led to me participating for the first time in a virtual ecumenical

service. Although the council is exclusively Christian, it represents a more ethnic and denominationally diverse relationship for our congregation. I also connected the Church to a state level multi-faith social justice group, Congregations Organized for a New Connecticut. This group is highly active and allowed us to develop deeper relationships with varied communities throughout the state.

To create some sense of consistency and normalcy for the congregation, I chose to postpone inviting someone from another faith tradition to speak to our congregation about a struggle in their community. However, I have verbal commitments from a rector and a rabbi to speak when appropriate. This reflects that I was successful in “building on the foundation laid for structured opportunities for interdenominational and multi-faith actions with other houses of worship in the community.” Before the pandemic, we began establishing relationships with the local congregational and Episcopal churches. Due to becoming more active ecumenically, the Church has continued to foster relationships with other houses of worship. Those recent connections and the pre-pandemic relationships have grown tighter through support of each other’s fellowship and service opportunities.

The attempt to join a local social club or business organization to reach beyond the religious network proved fruitless. I identified an established local business organization and sought to become involved. Although I reached out and showed interest, the point of contact only seemed interested in utilizing me and the Church for speaking at a Kwanzaa program and on another occasion, speaking about the history of Black people in the city. After not being able to provide their requests due to scheduling conflicts, they

became unresponsive. By the time I recognized that the opportunity collapsed, the time frame for this step expired.

In my proposal, I claimed that I would evaluate my success “through the completion of my strategies. Also, I will document my growth and involvement through regular self-reflection and journaling.” The steps that were executed were very successful in establishing relationships that aid us in extending our ministerial reach. By default, this has also increased our visibility to those in Milford who fit our target demographic. Yet, my ecumenist efforts remain incomplete as I was unable to fulfill one of my strategies.

Self-Care

The combination of a lack of delegation and always aiming to help has equaled a life-long lack of self-care. However, with the COVID-19 pandemic, pre-existing contributors to my lack of self-care were exacerbated by vanishing “off-days” and twenty-four-hours-a-day office hours. As someone who is married and has some complicated medical issues, I had to find physical, mental, and emotional reprieve to maintain my health, family, and ministry. My site team charged me to create my own list of needs and actions without their input. They felt that I knew what I needed more than they did. I decided to 1) create a personal sabbath or official day on which I will not entertain any church business, 2) create official hours to conduct and discuss ministry-based conversations, 3) take some form of vacation every quarter, 4) create an official devotion period every day, 5) add more holistic components to my fitness routine such as increased cardiovascular workouts, yoga, extended stretching, etc., and 6) take advantage of individual or group counseling.

I successfully created a personal sabbath on which I do not entertain any Church business. Like many other Pastors, I designated Mondays as my day off. I announced this to the Church leadership and those who can intercept any concerns that may need attention. I avoid phone calls that Church staff or officers can address. My response to many emails and text messages were also regulated to specific times on Tuesdays and Thursdays to not pressure me to answer them immediately. The creation of these boundaries has proven to be one of the better decisions that I made for my mental and emotional well-being.

Along with my day off, I also announced office hours when I will deal with Church business. Although I am usually available for personal and ministerial concerns, I allocated operational business conversations to specific hours on Tuesday through Friday. Both I and the administrative assistant have access to the calendar to avoid any scheduling conflicts. The membership, generally agreeing that I needed to slow down, embraced my altered availability. Furthermore, the new Director of Ministry Operations siphons some of the usual membership concerns.

As the Church's livestream technician and video editor for 2020 and much of 2021, I was forced to postpone taking a vacation every quarter. The introduction of streaming virtual services required me to edit and operate the livestream for some time. However, as the Church's technological capabilities increased and we have trained volunteers to operate the system, I informed the leadership that I will take a full week every quarter. At the time of the project's implementation, without anyone else who understood the technology, we would not have a streamed service if I did not edit and operate. Even when I had someone else serve as virtual pulpit supply, I was still

responsible for the editing and live streaming that Sunday morning. My desire to ensure that there was consistency for the congregation would not allow me to walk away. The confluence of that responsibility and lack of safe travel options created a scenario in which I did not feel that vacation was a reasonable option. However, due to the new volunteers, I was able to finally take some time away at the end of 2021. I intend to begin taking my quarterly vacation time beginning in the first quarter of 2022.

To create an official devotion period every day, I must reimagine what I intend to receive from devotional time. Although I had devotional periods during this project, they were never consistent. I am still seeking a schedule in which I can remain uninterrupted and be receptive to the practice. In the past, my devotional periods were experienced listening to resources during my daily one hour and fifteen-minute drive to another job. Finding that experience while remaining sedentary has proven difficult. To rectify this in the future, I plan to schedule devotional time in the middle of my workday as a set meeting.

The addition of more holistic components to my fitness routine such as increased cardiovascular workouts, yoga, extended stretching, etc. proved surprisingly helpful. A condition that creates the feeling of muscular tightness, spasms, and cramping throughout my body has increased my stress level over the past years. My attempts to assuage this by strength training is thwarted by the looming muscular tightness that follows a workout. Therefore, I created a regular workout routine, despite not attending the gym, and was able to increase my cardiovascular workout components and core. I also ensured that I perform extended stretching once a week. Successful implementation of this strategy

facilitated a reduction in headaches, physical discomfort, general stress and irritation, and allowed improved breathing.

Although I did not seek a personal counselor, I participated in group self-care sessions for Pastors offered by Duke Seminary and Mt. Aery Baptist Church in Bridgeport, CT. I was not able to attend all their sessions due to schedule conflicts; however, the few I did attend, both virtually and in-person, were very beneficial. Two sessions were most significant. Kirk Byron Jones, author of *Rest in The Storm*, facilitated one where he encouraged rest, friendship, allowing the world to see your best, to stop preaching from scarcity, and embrace the grace and know that we are loved. The other session that was impactful was with Dr. Troy Johnson. Among other things, he boldly challenged us to pastor and not parent, say no, get a therapist, self-reflect, and when in doubt, choose you. Not only did their words convict me to take some much-needed rest, but following their advice to be our best, I identified a therapist to explore sessions.

In my proposal, I claimed, “due to the concrete nature of my strategies, I will be able to evaluate my growth based upon the establishment of the vacation, personal sabbath, and office hours. In addition to keeping a log and calendar of activities and dates, I will look to my site team to reinforce my accomplishment and sustainment of these strategies.” I acknowledge that vacation was delayed. However, moving ahead, they were planned and communicated to the Church. I established a personal sabbath and office hours. My original evaluation plan did not include measuring devotional time, expanded physical fitness goals, or self-care counselling sessions. Yet those were also met or planned. I am pleased with what I was able to accomplish in such a liminal space.

I feel and operate better than I did before going into this project and I hope that it is visible to others.

Site Team Members:

Shad Hargrove – out-of-state virtual visitor, high-level management in e-commerce distribution

Kellee Hough – church member, scientist by degree, performing artist, connected to the Black medical community

Theresa Jones – church member, career in banking

Nicole Mayo Joseph – visitor, high-level management in public relations

Yves Joseph – visitor, high-level management in real estate development

Hugh Oliver – longtime member, deacon, retired

Rhonda Thacker – church member, high-level management in finance and technology

Tarik Thacker – church member, high-level management in trade finance

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A: PROPOSAL

Attracting, Developing Relationships with, and Involving Black-American Professionals

By

Reverend Horace A. Hough

A DEMONSTRATION PROJECT PROPOSAL

The New Theological Seminary of the West
New York Theological Seminary

Challenge Statement

As pastor of a small, yet historic Black American congregation in Milford, Connecticut, it is daunting to take on the task of attracting members who have the commitment, skill sets, and resources to “assume the mantle,” and who will anchor and grow the church. In my ministerial context, new developments such as the COVID-19 pandemic and unprecedented civil unrest, combined with common church struggles of aging membership and dwindling income have made things even more difficult. These obstacles are exacerbated by the small number of Black Americans in the primarily Caucasian demographic of Milford. To grow the congregation and to ensure its vivacity in the future, this project develops a model to

attract, develop relationships with, and involve Black American professionals between the ages of thirty-five and fifty years old with families.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Setting	3
Chapter 2: Preliminary Analysis of the Challenge	7
Chapter 3: Plan of Implementation	14
Chapter 4: Research Questions	16
Chapter 5: Ministerial Competencies	19
Chapter 6: Evaluation Process	23
Appendix A: Timeline	25
Bibliography	26

Chapter One

Introduction to the Setting

Challenge Statement:

As pastor of a small, yet historic Black American congregation in Milford, Connecticut, it is daunting to take on the task of attracting members who have the commitment, skill sets, and resources to “assume the mantle,” and who will anchor and grow the church. In my ministerial context, new developments such as the COVID-19 pandemic and unprecedented civil unrest, combined with common church struggles of aging membership and dwindling income have made things even more difficult. These obstacles are exacerbated by the small number of Black Americans in the primarily Caucasian demographic of Milford. To grow the congregation and to ensure its vivacity in the future, this project develops a model to attract, develop relationships with, and involve Black American professionals between the ages of thirty-five and fifty years old with families.

I am the pastor of First Baptist Church in Milford, Connecticut. This historic Black American church has been a haven of worship since 1893. Thirty years after the Emancipation Proclamation, Black American Baptists in the area were still traveling ten miles to New Haven, Connecticut, to worship at Immanuel Baptist Church. Due to the era and a lack of means, much of this travel was done by horseback, carts, and wagons. They would even bring their meals with them so that they could eat prior to their journey back to Milford. Eventually, the traveling congregation came together to develop a local house of worship. This would come to be known as First Baptist Church.

Although Milford is majority Caucasian, over the years, the church has remained a consistent spiritual community hub for people who seek to worship in the Black American Baptist tradition. Despite the fact that it has had 21 pastors in its 127-year history, the church has continued to grow and serve in the Milford community.

First Baptist currently has 173 members. Although the median age is fifty-five years old, most of the active members are over sixty years of age. Many of the current members have been a part of the church for thirty to forty years. Approximately only 10 percent of the combined membership and visitors live in the city. Congregants mainly travel from surrounding cities twenty to thirty minutes away.²⁴⁷ But, as highlighted in the aforementioned history, this was not always the case. Members who used to live in the city relocated to towns that either offered better opportunities for them and their families, or sought a more diverse community. Nevertheless, they continue to travel back to the church to worship. Milford is considered a working-class to middle-class town with 42.3% of adults having a bachelor's degree or higher and a median income of \$89,778.²⁴⁸ Proportionally, our congregation has maintained a large contingent of college-educated professionals, entrepreneurs, and high-level management. Over the last forty years, this demographic has allowed the church to navigate building a new edifice, purchasing a parsonage, buying the two neighboring houses of the church building, arranging and developing large community service programs, and other landmark ventures. The current church and flanking properties are in the historic district of the city. Subsequently, one of the purchased properties was built in the early 1700s and is strongly rumored to have a room upstairs that was used as part of the underground railroad. Owning property is already a point of pride within small congregations, especially ones whose history involves subjugation or oppression. Owning property that has cultural significance increases that pride exponentially. With a committed, skilled, and financially secure

²⁴⁷ Need new surveys and data

²⁴⁸ "Milford: New Haven County, Connecticut," Connecticut DataHaven, accessed December 10, 2020, <https://www.ctdatahaven.org/profiles/milford>.

membership, the church has thrived. Yet, despite its achievements over the years, being in the historic district also means that the church cannot build without approval from the city's historic society. The trifecta of an old building with severely limited parking, the city having limited public transportation options, and limitations on development, has allowed the church to operate comfortably for years without feeling significant pressure from sudden membership growth. However, with an aging congregation who no longer have the financial resources or ability to provide support the way they have in the past, a small church is becoming smaller.

Until recently, the church maintained a strong presence in the community. Its membership and leadership have always been relied on to be a voice of hope and progress. From the first and only Black American firefighter in the city serving as a committed deacon, to having a pond previously named with a racial slur for Black people renamed after the church's most notable pastor, Rev. Charles Walker, in honor of his work striving for unity, First Baptist has a history of connecting with the community. Pastor Walker was recently inducted, posthumously, into the Milford Hall of Fame.²⁴⁹ The church has also had a long history of supporting national causes and providing aid outside of its local area. Some of Pastor Walker's writings are even located in the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem, NY.²⁵⁰ Sadly, over the years and as leadership has changed, the church has lost that ecological impact. Its small size, location, and lack of members who reside in the city have added to this dwindling presence. Although the church strives to remain visible through charitable work and

²⁴⁹ Daniel Ortoleva, "Reverend Charles D. Walker," Milford Hall of Fame, accessed December 10, 2020, <http://milfordhalloffame.org/walker-reverend-charles-d>.

²⁵⁰ Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, "Charles D. Walker Papers: 1923-1987," New York Public Library, accessed July 1, 2020, <http://archives.nypl.org/scm/20588>.

being active in social justice and unity events, the Milford community at large knows the church more for its charitable Clothes Closet mission than for being a church. Although that may be a testament to the impact of the Clothes Closet mission, it is also a revelatory mirror that shows the decline of its significance as a part of the surrounding community.

I have had the privilege to serve as pastor since July of 2016. When I initially served as interim pastor one year prior to that, I was impressed by the congregation's commitment to service and love of Christ. Sadly, I was also aware that there was no strategic plan to make sure that the church would be sustained in the future. I have found that, although we have seen growth in membership and interest, we have not been able to regularly attract members who have the skills and resources to help us grow. For us, that demographic is Black American professionals between the ages of thirty-five and fifty years old.

Unlike many other Black American churches its size in the area, First Baptist congregation's socioeconomic standing, pool of people with management-level skills, familiar traditional church aesthetic, small community, and disarming kindness, place it in a great position to attract a demographic of thirty-five- to fifty-year-old Black American professionals with families that will help revitalize the church and steer it successfully into the future. As part of that demographic, I believe that First Baptist is ideally suited to succeed in this venture. That genus of congregant brings skills, finances, stability. To be clear, this is not an attempt to embrace classism or practice hierarchy in the church. We will continue to serve all and carry out the message of Jesus Christ. This project is an attempt to stabilize the much-too-often inconsistent organizational

operations that have led to the demise of many other churches. I believe that this project will better equip First Baptist to carry on its historic tradition with more life and fervor.

Chapter 2
Preliminary Analysis

Challenge Statement:

As pastor of a small, yet historic Black American congregation in Milford, Connecticut, it is daunting to take on the task of attracting members who have the commitment, skill sets, and resources to “assume the mantle,” and who will anchor and grow the church. In my ministerial context, new developments such as the COVID-19 pandemic and unprecedented civil unrest, combined with common church struggles of aging membership and dwindling income have made things even more difficult. These obstacles are exacerbated by the small number of Black Americans in the primarily Caucasian demographic of Milford. To grow the congregation and to ensure its vivacity in the future, this project develops a model to attract, develop relationships with, and involve Black American professionals between the ages of thirty-five and fifty years old with families.

Introduction

I, like many others, have had the awkward experience of worshiping at a small church, feeling revived by the music, inspired by the message, maybe even encouraged by the fellowship, but still feeling an almost insurmountable gap separating me from the other congregants. This chasm may not be due to a lack of love, desire, or passion to carry out the message of Christ. It may not be rooted in a feeling of superiority or inferiority. Many times, this feeling stems from socio-economic, socio-cultural, and educational differences. Sadly, as people, it can be difficult to connect with others who do not speak our cultural language. Culture, in this case, is not delimited to ethnicity, but inclusive of our community-level practices and habits.

First Baptist Church exudes sincere kindness, love, and a commitment to service more than any other church in which I have served. However, like many other houses of worship, much of our congregation is transitioning either in life or in location. For First Baptist, transitioning members are those who anchored the membership and always made sure that the church received whatever it needed. Whether that meant that a deacon built the risers for the choir loft, the men constructed walls in the fellowship hall to create office space and classrooms, a woman stitched curtains that would be used in the sanctuary, or members provided thousands of dollars to make sure that the bills were

paid, those generations of skilled and committed “builders” and “boomers” have been the backbone of the church. With their increasing absence or inability to serve, we are not only finding a lack of financial support, we also do not have the people with the knowledge, skills, and commitment to develop a secure foundation and plan for the future. To make the situation more problematic, not only is our older population diminishing, we are also lacking “Generation X” and “millennials” to take their place.

Unexpectedly, a new complication was added to the mix in early 2020. The social complications, limitations, and fear that has arisen from the COVID-19 pandemic has forced churches everywhere to modify their methods of reaching and involving their congregations.

Analysis of Setting

First Baptist Church is not suffering solely because of the aforementioned reasons. The current congregation, although aging, includes a strong amount of college-educated, retired professionals. With high-level school administrators, social workers, entrepreneurs, administrative workers, accountants, attorneys, etc., visiting professionals do not feel the same socio-cultural tension that they may find in some other Black churches of similar size. However, there are added factors that create obstacles. With an active membership of 173 people, its unassuming and architecturally dated building, its hidden position away from the road, its lack of parking that fits only twelve to fifteen cars, its location in the historic district of Milford, and Milford’s primarily Caucasian community, attracting Black American professionals between the ages of thirty-five and fifty years old becomes even more difficult.

I believe creating a model to attract, develop relationships with, and involve these professionals, would resolve several burdens of the church. Families in this demographic who have children tend to want to stay settled during their children’s school years. There are a plethora of blogs, websites, and online chat threads dedicated to the challenge of relocating when children are involved. In contrast, younger adults tend to move around. The combination of age and employment equips my target age bracket to be more

financially stable and able to contribute to the church. In contrast, younger adults may still be struggling to find financial security. Professionals also have skills that they have acquired through education or experience that can be utilized for operations and ministry. I use the word “families” because it implies children. Bringing in Black American professionals with children will help us develop a generation that will be raised in the church. Although I do not believe that location will inhibit First Baptist from being able to accomplish this task, I do believe that it must be considered in our methodology.

According to Connecticut town profiles, 2019 data shows that Milford has a population of approximately 51,000 people.²⁵¹ With 1,553 Black/non-Hispanic residents, the Black American population sits at a trivial 3.04%. Although this is better than the 2.6% of 2018, it remains an obstacle when aiming to grow the church while embracing our cultural heritage. However, according to DataHaven, in surrounding towns like Stratford, Black/non-Hispanics make up 15% of the population. Flanking us to the north, New Haven, boasts 31%.²⁵² Favorably, for us, people are now willing to travel for church, and our target demographic generally has the means to do so. As one professional observed upon hearing about my project: “the thirty-five to fifty demographic is a mobile demographic with choices as to where to congregate...” We also have an option to attend church online for those who are not able to physically take part in services due to distance and scheduling conflicts.

Regarding the labeling of generations, I am careful not to use terms such as “Generation X,” “xennial,” or “millennial” for three reasons. Firstly, there are inconsistencies in the categorization of ages. Some sources state that “Generation X” is from 1965 to 1982.²⁵³

²⁵¹ Connecticut Data Collaborative, *Milford, Connecticut: CERC Town Profile 2019*, January 16, 2019, <https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/cerc-pdfs/2019/milford-2019.pdf>.

²⁵² Mark Abraham, et al., *Greater New Haven Community Index 2019*, DataHaven, 2019, https://www.ctdatahaven.org/sites/ctdatahaven/files/DataHaven_GNH_Community_Index_2019.pdf.

²⁵³ “How The Last Five Generations Have Changed Us,” Growing Leaders Blog, May 24, 2017, <https://growingleaders.com/blog/last-five-generations-changed-us/>.

Another references 1965 to 1979.²⁵⁴ And yet another lists 1980 as the end date.²⁵⁵

Secondly, the issue of attracting Black American professionals is one that may spread beyond this decade. And in turn, this project may prove to be helpful for yet-to-be-named generations. Thirdly, as a person who falls within the “gray area” of 1979 to 1982, I have personally found that generational traits are less decided by a person’s birth year and more so determined by the generational culture in which they were raised. For instance, as the youngest of three brothers whose oldest brother is fourteen years my senior, I was raised in a household with older parents and older siblings, and introduced to music, television, and values, older than me. I consider myself “Generation X.” In contrast, someone my age who is the oldest of three and born to young parents may consider themselves a “millennial.”

First Baptist also has a few traits that I believe would directly attract this demographic. Although our church and sanctuary have an older aesthetic, it is one that is familiar and nostalgic to my target audience. It is reminiscent of the churches they grew up in or that their parents or grandparents attended. In contrast, young adults have no personal connection to a church as “old” as ours. First Baptist also provides small church community relationships in which to raise children. A few of our new members who fit this demographic have expressed their appreciation for the “village” feel. I also cannot ignore the impression I leave as pastor. As a leader and member of the target demographic, people within the age bracket and culture feel that the appearance of the church may belie something more relevant for them. Furthermore, I intentionally use a preaching style that speaks to a wide range of generations. Subsequently, some seniors and “Generation X” members believe I am younger than I am. However, I have found that my youthful impression helps balance out what could be considered an outdated church.

²⁵⁴ Kasasa, “Boomers, Gen X, Gen Y, and Gen Z Explained,” last modified October 20, 2020, <https://www.kasasa.com/articles/generations/gen-x-gen-y-gen-z>.

²⁵⁵ Michael Dimock, “Defining Generations: Where Millennials end and Generation Z Begins,” Pew Research Center, January 17, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/>.

There are some unique factors that must be considered when aiming to develop relationships with Black American professionals. Although professionals can exist in the same economic class, it does not mean that they exist in the same social class. There must be considerations made for their academic experience. Did they attend a historically Black college or university, or a primarily White institution? Are they a part of a historically Black Greek letter organization or a primarily White fraternity or sorority, or did they refrain from attempting to join those groups? Have they previously been or are they currently a member of a Black social group? Are they a member of the “Black elite?” Do they identify with the experience of the “majority” of Black people in this country, or has their experience been in the minority? Do they believe that respectability politics and negotiation is the solution for the advancement of Black Americans, or do they ascribe to a culturally prouder, and consequently defiant, method of living? Did they grow up poor? Are they currently poor or in poverty despite their education or employment? Do they have knowledge of the history of Black people in this country? Did they grow up in a Black church, a White church, a multi-cultural church, or did they not attend a church at all? These questions and more determine what they may be seeking in a church.

Although there is no way to address all the potential answers and subsequent desires regarding our appeal to Black professionals, there are some commonly accepted truths that must be acknowledged:

- The more advanced the academic degree and the more responsibility one has in their employment, the more likely they are to have an aversion to disorganization and lack of direction. Adir, T. Lummis alludes to this in her paper, “‘Heart and Head’ in Reaching Pastors of Black Churches,” when she references Sherard Burn’s online paper entitled, “The Need for an Educated Black Clergy.” Burn, in addressing Black professionals’ expectations of educated leadership, writes: “‘While we must give respect to our history, we are challenged to consider that the way we used to ‘do church’ a generation ago may not be the way to do it today. The is [sic] increasingly apparent as we witness the overall rise in education among African-Americans...with this increase in education comes an

increase in expectation...In other words, shall we expect some measure of intellectual competency from our doctors, lawyers, and politicians (occasionally) but excuse the minister from his academic responsibility? God forbid.”²⁵⁶

- Lack of transparency in financial matters and lack of ethical leadership are anathema.²⁵⁷
- An ability to contribute beyond financial donations is preferred.
- For those who culturally identify as Black, although methods may be debated, addressing the needs of Black people in the country is vital. This issue continues to be amplified as some churches ignore the specific challenges and concerns of Black Americans in their congregations.²⁵⁸

Goals

In order to measure my goals, it is important that I define the terms of my challenge statement. For the purposes of this project, to “attract” is to create an environment that sustains regular visitation from my target demographic. “Developing relationships with” is to leverage our attractiveness for the purpose of engendering a personal connection with our visitors rather than one where they only observe. “Attract” and “developing relationships with” will be measured by detailed accounting of feedback and regular communication established with visitors of the target demographic. At the time of writing, due to stay-at-home measures amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the church community has been forced to function almost exclusively online. This will require our methods of documentation to be primarily digital.

²⁵⁶ Adair T. Lummis, “‘Heart and Head’ in Reaching Pastors of Black Churches,” Hartford Institute for Religion Research, August 2006, http://hrr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/lummis_article5.html.

²⁵⁷ Ron Edmondson, “5 mistakes Pastors Make with Church Finances,” Facts & Trends, April 13, 2015, <https://factsandtrends.net/2015/04/13/top-5-mistakes-pastors-make-with-church-finances/>.

²⁵⁸ Dara T. Mathis, “The Church’s Black Exodus,” The Atlantic, October 11, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2020/10/why-black-parishioners-are-leaving-churches/616588/>.

To correctly measure the church's ability to "attract," traditionally tangible methods of documenting the type and regularity of visits from our guests must be modified. Cards for visitors to fill-in their information, the use of manual headcount tallying devices such as clickers, and other similar systems, can and will no longer provide accurate data reporting. As we pivot into new methods, data will be obtained through online guest books and sign-ups for mailing lists.

"Developing relationships with" and "involve" will be measured by an increase in participation of our target demographic in our ministries or activities. Use of the internet has extended our reach beyond our sanctuary. Consequently, involving those who will not physically be in attendance requires us to involve them virtually. Data will be obtained through reports from our ministries providing information on visitor participation.

We have some early confirmation that these can be correctly measured, and that we have welcomed two members to our congregation during the COVID-19-induced quarantine. The new members reached out, received their orientation, and have become active solely by utilizing virtual methods.

Summary

I believe that First Baptist's ability to care, love, and maintain a comfortable balance between curiosity and respect of privacy will prove to be more valuable in developing relationships than I can estimate. Furthermore, the church's desire to utilize a level of professionalism in their operations allows for continual growth and adaptation to new methods. Even without a concerted effort, the church has attracted a small, but involved, group of attendees who fit the target audience. Due to our potential and the disposition of our fellowship, visitors of our target demographic also return regularly. An ability to connect on a cultural and socio-economic level, and a membership size that offers a "tight-knit" community prove that, with attention, we can draw even more. Yet, despite

willingness and desire, without a new generation of people who are skilled and willing to inherit the task, we will continue to decline. This project will not only introduce new people to our congregation, it will also force our congregation to embrace the ripple effects of welcoming more new people.

Chapter 3

Plan of Implementation

To increase First Baptist's appeal to Black American professionals between the ages of thirty-five and fifty years old, I will first revisit the information and feedback I have obtained prior to the beginning of this project. Using that information as well as data from interviews and surveys with members, visitors, and those in the target demographic who are tangentially connected to the church, I will implement a plan of action to address what is lacking. Finally, I will review the results to determine if the plan proved to be effective.

Although the presented goals may seem "simple," successful implementation may prove to be difficult. Complications such as limited physical and virtual availability, potential suspicion that they may be pressured to give financially, and a lack of trust regarding the church's motives, may also hinder some participation. This plan is created with the intention to avoid and negate those difficulties.

Goal One: To identify and evaluate the needs and desires of the Black American professionals in my ministry context. In both strategy two and three, I will reiterate the importance of First Baptist providing for them rather than the church looking for their help.

Strategy One – I will first review and document what I have already been told by people from the target demographic. Over the past two years, the concern about the absence of the target demographic motivated me to ask members and visitors their opinions on how to rectify the situation.

Strategy Two – Create a questionnaire to be completed by members within the demographic and six to ten non-members within the demographic. Its purpose will be to compile a more relevant and contemporary list of needs, as well as allow me to obtain information from various subjective lenses.

Strategy Three – Conduct interviews with all who have completed the questionnaire, as well as conduct interviews with three pastors who have accomplished my project's goal

in their specific ministry context. Considering that there are pastors in other areas who have successfully accomplished what I aim to achieve, I need to converse with them and document their input.

Evaluation for Goal One – Success will be measured by an examination of the information collected through surveying and interviewing professionals and through the information gathered from the pastoral interviews.

Goal 2: Examine the data from goal one as well as the data from evaluating pre-existing teams that were created to address financial security and the crisis of racism. Implement a plan of action to address two of the needs or desires revealed from this data.

Strategy One – After reviewing the questionnaires and interviews, I aim to identify two immediately actionable areas that can be addressed. Although there may be a variety of suggestions and concerns, I will focus my attention on two in order to monitor progress.

Strategy Two – In an effort to equip the church rather than equipping myself, I will create a plan to involve church members to address the identified areas.

Strategy Three – Implement plans and document activity.

Evaluation for Goal Two – With plans in full operation, I will be able to review data regarding participation from the target demographic and utilize surveys for feedback. Success will be measured by positive feedback and whether participation remains consistent over three to five weeks.

Goal 3: Create a dynamic flexible model that can be implemented annually. A dynamic flexible model will not only improve upon what was done, it will also allow for circumstantial modifications. Ideally, this model would also prove to be relevant to those in other ministry contexts.

Strategy One – Evaluate the programs accordingly.

Strategy Two – With clearer knowledge of what to do, I will create a permanent model to be maintained by the laity. The importance of involving the laity is based in commitment; laity rarely leave churches at the rate of clergy and have a sense of responsibility to their particular fellowship.

Strategy Three – Recruit laity in the target demographic to run and sustain the program.

Evaluation for Goal Three – Success will be measured by the completion of the model and the recruitment of someone to lead the program.

Chapter 4

Research Questions

Biblical/Theological

1. What is the Church for the professional class?

The Church is many things to many people. To some, it is a sanctuary. To others, it is a launchpad for social action. To some, it is a community. To others, it is a spiritual and emotional fueling station. To attract, develop relationships with, and involve Black American professionals, understanding their ecclesiology is paramount. Not only must we grasp what the Church is to them, it must be understood what they desire it to become. Furthermore, their ecclesiology may also be rooted in their theology and Christology. If one believes, as James Sanders writes, “Christ was not a Christian, and God is not a Christian,” then they may be less conservative when considering the salvific nature of exclusive belief in Jesus.²⁵⁹ Consequently, they may see the Church’s mission as more community-related than insular. If one believes that Jesus was Black as James Cone asserts, then they may feel that the Church should focus more on the plight of Black people and those who share in the Black struggle. This is especially true if one ascribes to the idea that “if Jesus’ presence is real and not docetic, is it not true that Christ must be black in order to remain faithful to the divine promise to bear the suffering of the poor?”²⁶⁰

Like a rest stop along a highway, I posit that, for the professional class, the Church is a sanctuary for believers and repository to be equipped for service. This allows them to worship and serve in the same way as many Biblical professionals. One such professional was Nehemiah. A man who was culturally connected to people in need but who was also cupbearer to the king, Nehemiah is an Old Testament version of the modern-day Black

²⁵⁹ James A. Sanders, *The Monotheizing Process: It’s Origins and Development* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2014), 59.

²⁶⁰ James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1978), 135.

American professional. In the account of Nehemiah, his concern for his people led him to use his position, skill, and influence to provide safety for his people:

Then I said to them, ‘You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace. I also told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me. They replied, ‘Let us start rebuilding.’ So they began this good work.²⁶¹

During the wall-building process, he also encouraged lenders to utilize more reasonable lending practices, brought in the prophet Ezra to represent the voice of God, and even managed to keep a small army ready in case of attack.

From Nehemiah to Paul, Priscilla, Aquila, Joseph of Arimathea, and more, we see that professionals were important to the growth of the Church. Without Priscilla and Aquila, who would have honed Apollo’s understanding of the faith? Without Paul, who would have spread the gospel farther than it had ever gone before? Without Joseph of Arimathea, what tomb would Jesus have been assigned? Yet, it is about more than what they can offer. Although Nehemiah served as project manager, he had an intense desire to be of use to his people. Paul repeatedly proclaims throughout his letters the purpose, mission, and strength he gets from his relationship with Jesus. These Biblical examples of professionals not only show people who have something to offer, but people who were nourished by the community they served. As part of that community, they grew spiritually, were encouraged, inspired, and more committed to their purpose.

Sociological/Psychological

2. What are the needs of Black American professionals? Furthermore, with many Black churches not addressing many of the needs of Black American professionals, would they attend and become part of a fellowship if their needs and desires were not met?

²⁶¹ Neh. 2:17–18 NIV

When aiming to attract any demographic, an understanding of what they want and need is preferable. However, when dealing with a demographic that is not usually given attention, there will be a few aspects that are higher priority. As I research my target demographic, I believe it will be important to uncover their “must haves” to feeling comfortable in a church. With the landscape of the Church shifting severely from in-person to virtual, finding these preferences can prove to be complicated. Without as much in-person contact, the community that people desire will not only be drastically altered, but may be unachievable.

Organizational Research

3. What kind of leader will Black American professionals between the ages of thirty-five and fifty years old follow?

It is widely understood that one pastor cannot run every ministry or program in a church. Yet, in churches with less than 200 members, the senior pastor-centric model is still readily in action. Although professionals may respect and follow the senior pastor, in this project, I will research what other leadership models may work. Pastoral models such as coach, shepherd, teacher, theologian, father, etc., have their strengths and weaknesses. However, I presume that one or two are the most attractive. Yet, only looking at pastoral leadership styles would be injurious to the project and the future of the church. I will also examine what kind of lay leadership will earn the interest of the target demographic. With laity leading, the church can continue to progress despite varied changes in the pastorate.

Chapter 5

Competencies

My site team is composed of five church members, two regular visitors, and one virtual visitor. The majority of this group was selected due to the fact that they fit the target demographic. There are two married couples (all four individuals work in high-level corporate positions). One couple has been members of the church for a few years and the other couple visits regularly. Another site team member, who also works in the corporate world, has been part of the church for four years. The virtual visitor is in high-level management and lives out-of-state. However, he is familiar with the physical church, my leadership style, and our online presence. The final two members are composed of one stable member who has been active in the church for over forty years, and one who has been there for five, but is very-well connected to the national Black medical community. I have gathered this group because they are either part of or are very familiar with the target demographic, or have a great understanding of the ministry context. I believe their counsel, skills, connections, and wisdom will prove to aid in the success of my project.

Site Team Members:

Shad Hargrove – out-of-state virtual visitor, high-level management in e-commerce distribution

Kellee Hough – church member, scientist by degree, performing artist, connected to the Black medical community

Theresa Jones – church member, career in banking

Nicole Mayo Joseph – visitor, high-level management in public relations

Yves Joseph – visitor, high-level management in real estate development

Hugh Oliver – longtime member, deacon, retired

Rhonda Thacker – church member, high-level management in finance and technology

Tarik Thacker – church member, high-level management in trade finance

Competencies Chosen for Development

I. Leader

Although First Baptist Church is not a large church, I feel that the membership's expectations of leadership rival larger and more prominent churches. I am appreciative to pastor a group of people who embrace and expect leadership. Yet, my site team feels that, although I show great leadership, I am lacking when it comes to setting clear expectations, showing appreciation, and delegating.

If I am going to attract professionals, I must create an environment and behave in a way that fosters trust in my leadership. Expanding my competency as a leader is vital to accomplishing this task.

Strategies

- a. Identify and work directly with a mentor that exhibits strong leadership traits that I would like to foster. I will utilize my site team to hold me accountable for continuing my meetings.
- b. Take advantage of five online learning or training platforms such as LinkedIn Learning and podcasts.
- c. Read a minimum of two books on leadership or about charismatic leaders that lead with characteristics I admire.

Evaluation

I will evaluate my success through the completion of my strategies as well as increased successful delegation. A questionnaire will also be provided to my site team and church leadership to determine my progress.

II. Ecumenist

Although I personally have local relationships outside of my denomination and faith, my introverted demeanor has allowed the church to further fall into obscurity in the local community. Although we provide community service, our presence as a church is still unknown to many. The regular response when someone finds out we are in Milford is the same as my septuagenarian members say it was forty years ago: *there is a Black church in Milford?*

My site team feels that if we are going to reach farther than we have in the past, personal and direct outreach may be the most immediate way to activate a pipeline of congregants within the target demographic. In a world where our people are looking to intently observe if the Church works on behalf of diverse groups of people, I must work on growing my competency as an ecumenist.

Strategies

- a. Become more active with local ecumenical and multi-faith councils and events.
- b. Invite someone from another faith tradition to speak to our congregation about a struggle in their community.
- c. Build on the foundation laid for structured opportunities for interdenominational and multi-faith actions with other houses of worship in the community.
- d. Join a local social club or business organization to reach beyond the religious network.

Evaluation

I will evaluate my success through the completion of my strategies. Also, I will document my growth and involvement through regular self-reflection and journaling.

III. Self-Care

The combination of a lack of delegation and always aiming to help has equaled a life-long lack of self-care. However, with the COVID-19 pandemic forcing everyone to work from home, pre-existing contributors to my lack of self-care have been exacerbated by vanishing “off-days” and twenty-four-hours-a-day office hours. As someone who is married and has had some complicated medical issues, I will not be able to maintain my health, family, or ministry if I do not find physical, emotional, and spiritual reprieve.

Strategies

- a. Create a personal sabbath or official day on which I will not entertain any church business.
- b. Create official hours to have church-based conversations.
- c. Take some form of vacation every quarter.

- d. Create an official devotion period every day.
- e. Add more holistic components to my fitness routine such as increased cardiovascular workouts, yoga, extended stretching, etc.
- f. Take advantage of individual or group counselling.

Evaluation

Due to the concrete nature of my strategies, I will be able to evaluate my growth based upon the establishment of the vacation, personal sabbath, and office hours. In addition to keeping a log and calendar of activities and dates, I will look to my site team to reinforce my accomplishment and sustainment of these strategies.

Chapter 6

Evaluation Process

The evaluation process for this project needs to clearly identify three aspects:

1. The method of evaluation, such as questionnaires and observations.
2. The agent performing the evaluation, such as the candidate or representatives from the site team.
3. The criteria for the evaluation.

Method of Evaluation 1: Feedback from Questionnaires and Interviews

To gauge the success of my project, I will revisit the responses to the original questionnaires and interviews with participants. I will also engage in reflective dialogue with the participants, juxtaposing the state of the church at the time of their input with the state of the church upon completion of the project.

Method of Evaluation 2: Examining Data

Successful attraction and involvement of my desired demographic will be reflected in our membership, visitor, and participatory data. I, along with representation of our site team, will review the data and record the status of our membership and visitors. This will be for the purpose of logging growth, decline, or stagnation.

Method of Evaluation 3: Observing Participation

I will record the number of laity who volunteer to implement the dynamic flexible model in the future.

The purpose of this project is to create an entrance into our church's community and an environment that will be attractive and fulfilling to the target demographic of Black professionals. Throughout the execution of the project, I will collect data acquired from participants as well as use information that was previously provided. Utilizing that information, I will put forward a plan to address the concerns, desires, and suggestions received. Throughout implementation, I will monitor requested and unsolicited input

from the target demographic to make necessary adjustments. The natural corollary of this project's success will be found in our congregational data. Therefore, monitoring membership, visitor and participatory data, feedback, and willingness from laity to continue what was implemented will provide enough evidence for evaluation.

Appendix A: Timeline (at time of proposal)

December 2020 interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Submit proposal for acceptance- Begin developing questionnaire- Solidify list of pastors and professionals to- Start online leadership courses
January 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Distribute questionnaires- Conduct interviews with professionals and pastors- Meet with faculty advisor
February 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Evaluate questionnaire and interview responses- Identify the two most achievable and effective suggestions- Develop plan to involve laity to aid in implementation- Meet with faculty advisor
March 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Implement plans and document activity- Meet with faculty advisor
April 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Continue implementation and documentation- Meet with faculty advisor
May 2021 accordingly	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Reevaluate method of execution and adjust- Meet with faculty advisor
June 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Continue implementation and documentation- Meet with faculty advisor
July 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Develop model to be maintained by laity- Recruit laity in the target demographic to run and maintain model
August 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Write dissertation and meet with faculty advisor
March 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Defend dissertation project

Bibliography for Proposal

- "(2003) Rev. Jeremiah Wright, 'Confusing God And Government.'" Blackpast. May 6, 2008. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/2008-rev-jeremiah-wright-confusing-god-and-government/>.
- "A Conversation With Four Millennial Preachers." .base. June 26, 2019. <https://btpbase.org/a-conversation-with-four-millennial-preachers/>.
- "Boomers, Gen X, Gen Y, And Gen Z Explained." Kasasa. October 20, 2020. <https://www.kasasa.com/articles/generations/gen-x-gen-y-gen-z>.
- "First Baptist Clothes Closet provides clothing for those in need." The Milford Mirror. Last modified May 23, 2016. <https://www.milfordmirror.com/news/community/article/First-Baptist-Clothes-Closet-provides-clothing-13883791.php>.
- "Historic Buildings Of Connecticut: Milford." Historic Buildings Of Connecticut. Accessed December 10, 2020. <http://historicbuildingsct.com/category/towns/milford/>.
- "How COVID-19 Has Impacted the Black Church." Barna. June 25, 2020. <https://www.barna.com/research/covid-19-impacted-black-church/>.
- "How The Last Five Generations Have Changed Us." Growing Leaders Blog. May 24, 2017. <https://growingleaders.com/blog/last-five-generations-changed-us/>.
- "Jackson, Joseph Harrison." The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute. Accessed December 10, 2020. <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/jackson-joseph-harrison>.
- "Judge H. Walker." Legacy. June 28, 2018. <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/ctpost/obituary.aspx?n=judge-h-walker&pid=189405704&fhid=4787>.
- "Milford: New Haven County, Connecticut." Connecticut DataHaven. Accessed December 10, 2020. <https://www.ctdatahaven.org/profiles/milford>.
- "Milford history: First Baptist Church was incorporated in 1895." The Milford Mirror. Last modified May 24, 2019. <https://www.milfordmirror.com/news/article/Milford-history-First-Baptist-Church-was-13893683.php>.

- "Racial Double Standard in Drug Laws Persists Today." Equal Justice Initiative. December 9, 2019. <https://eji.org/news/racial-double-standard-in-drug-laws-persists-today/>.
- "Walker Pond Fishing near Milford, Connecticut." Hook and Bullet. Accessed December 10, 2020. <https://www.hookandbullet.com/fishing-walker-pond-milford-ct/>.
- "'Black Power' Speech (28 July 1966, by Stokely Carmichael)." Encyclopedia. Last modified December 12, 2020. <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/dictionaries-thesauruses-pictures-and-press-releases/black-power-speech-28-july-1966-stokely-carmichael>.
- Abraham, Mark, Camille Seaberry, Josephine Ankrah, Alexandra Bourdillon, Kelly Davila, Emily Finn, Shaun McGann, Aparna Nathan, Jessica Clavette, and Brian Slattery. *Greater New Haven Community Index 2019*. Connecticut DataHaven. 2019. https://www.ctdatahaven.org/sites/ctdatahaven/files/DataHaven_GNH_Community_Index_2019.pdf.
- Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. "Now Is The Time To Talk About What We Are Actually Talking About." *The New Yorker*. December 2, 2016. <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/now-is-the-time-to-talk-about-what-we-are-actually-talking-about>.
- Agar, Michael H. *The Professional Stranger: An Informal Introduction To Ethnography*. Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing, 1996.
- Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press, 2012.
- Ali, Carroll A. Watkins. *Survival & Liberation: Pastoral Theology in African American Context*. Saint Louis: Chalice Press, 1999.
- Ammerman, Nancy T., Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney, eds. *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.
- Andrews, Dale P. *Practical Theology for Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology & African American Folk Religion*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.
- Ashe, Arthur, and Arnold Rampersad. *Days Of Grace: A Memoir*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993.
- Bakke, Ray. *A Theology As Big As The City*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997.
- Balcetis, Emily. *Clearer, Closer, Better: How Successful People See the World*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2020.
- Baldwin, James. *The Fire Next Time*. New York: Vintage International, 1992.
- Banfield, William C. *Cultural Codes: Makings Of A Black Music Philosophy*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2010.

- Banks, Adelle M. "More Multiracial Churches Led By Black, Hispanic Pastors." *Christianity Today*. January 17, 2020. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2020/january/more-multiracial-churches-black-hispanic-pastors-mosaix.html>.
- Baradaran, Mehrsa. *The Color Of Money: Black Banks And The Racial Wealth Gap*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017.
- Bellinger, G. Michael. "Why I'll Be Marching With Sharpton." *New York Times*. February 13, 1999. <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/02/13/opinion/why-ill-be-marching-with-sharpton.html>.
- Bevans, Stephen B. *Models Of Contextual Theology*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002.
- Biewen, John. "The Lie That Invented Racism." Filmed 2019 at TEDxCharlottesville, Charlottesville, VA. Video, 18:14. https://www.ted.com/talks/john_biewen_the_lie_that_invented_racism.
- Billingsley, Andrew. *Black Families in White America*. New York: Touchstone Books, 1988.
- Blair, Christine Eaton. *The Art Of Teaching The Bible: A Practical Guide For Adults*. Louisville: Geneva Press, 2001.
- Bloxsom, Bill. "Milford clergy lie silent on ground to note last minutes of George Floyd's life." *New Haven Register*. Last modified June 5, 2020. <https://www.nhregister.com/news/article/Milford-clergy-lay-silent-on-ground-to-note-last-15318312.php>.
- Blumberg, Antonia. "Activist Bree Newsome Reveals Staggering Faith During Confederate Flag Action." *Huffpost*. Last modified. June 29, 2015. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/bree-newsome-faith_n_7692004.
- Blyden, Edward W. *Christianity, Islam And The Negro Race*. Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1994.
- Branson, Mark Lau. *Memories, Hopes, And Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry, Missional Engagement, and Congregational Change*. 2nd ed. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016.
- Brown, Brené. *Dare To Lead*. New York: Random House, 2018.
- Buckingham, Danielle. "Invisible Labor: A Mixed-Method Study Of African American Women And Their Emotional Labor In The Academy." PhD diss., University of Mississippi, 2018. <https://egrove.olemiss.edu/etd/849>.
- Buckingham, Marcus, and Curt Coffman. *First, Break All The Rules: What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently*. New York: Gallup Press, 2016.
- Byrne, Rhonda. *The Secret*. New York, NY: Atria Books, 2006.

- Caballero, Luzdelia. "Tucson pastor speaks out following decision on Breonna Taylor case." *KGUN9*. Last modified September 24, 2020. <https://www.kgun9.com/news/america-in-crisis/tucson-pastor-speaks-out-following-decision-on-breonna-taylor-case>.
- Cannon, Katie Geneva. *Katie's Canon: Womanism And The Soul Of The Black Community*. New York: Continuum, 1995.
- Cashin, Sheryll. *The Failures Of Integration: How Race and Class are Undermining the American Dream*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2004.
- Cathey, Libby. "Black Minneapolis pastor calls on white evangelicals to 'speak up' in wake of George Floyd's death." ABC News. June 7, 2020. <https://abcnews.go.com/US/black-minneapolis-pastor-calls-white-evangelicals-speak-wake/story?id=71114467>.
- Cherniss, Cary, and Cornelia W. Roche. *Leading With Feeling: Nine Strategies of Emotionally Intelligent Leadership*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020.
- Christian, Tanya A. "Black Church Leaders Rebuke New Trump Ad." *Essence*. September 17, 2020. <https://www.essence.com/news/black-church-leaders-rebuke-new-trump-ad/>.
- Coates, Ta-Nehisi. *The Beautiful Struggle*. New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2008.
- Cone, James H. *My Soul Looks Back*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2000.
- Cone, James Hal. *God Of The Oppressed*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 1978.
- Connecticut Data Collaborative. *Milford, Connecticut: CERC Town Profile 2019*. January 16, 2019. <https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/cerc-pdfs/2019/milford-2019.pdf>.
- Cose, Ellis. "The Black Gender Gap." *Newsweek*. March 2, 2003. <https://www.newsweek.com/black-gender-gap-132915>.
- Cose, Ellis. *The Rage Of A Privileged Class: Why are middle-class blacks angry? Why should America care?*. New York: HarperCollins, 1994.
- Crawford, A. Elaine Brown. *Hope In The Holler: A Womanist Theology*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.
- Delpit, Lisa. *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom*. New York: The New Press, 2006.
- De Pree, Max. *Leadership Is An Art*. New York: Dell, 1990.
- DiAngelo, Robin. *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard For White People To Talk About Racism*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2018.

- Dietrich, Walter, and Ulrich Luz, eds. *The Bible in a World Context: An Experiment In Contextual Hermeneutics*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.
- Dimock, Michael. "Defining Generations: Where Millennials end and Generation Z Begins." Pew Research Center. January 17, 2019.
<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/>.
- Douglas, Camille, Marisa Ruggirello, Kelsi A. Horn, Kenedi Robinson, Sondos Hosam Gharib, Paige Boyd, Lauren Shields, Hauwa Abbas, Heather Maxon, John Lavaccare, et al. *100 Questions & Answers About Gen X: Forged by economics, technology, pop culture and work*. East Lansing: Michigan State University School of Journalism, 2019.
- Douglas, Kelly Brown. *Sexuality And The Black Church: A Womanist Perspective*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1999.
- Douglas, Kelly Brown. *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies And The Justice Of God*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2015.
- Douglas, Kelly Brown. *The Black Christ*. 25th anniversary ed. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2019.
- Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2003.
- Dudley, Drew. "Everyday Leadership." Filmed 2010 at TEDxToronto, Toronto, ON. Video, 6:02.
https://www.ted.com/talks/drew_dudley_everyday_leadership?language=en.
- Dupuis, Jacques. *Who Do You Say I Am?: Introduction to Christology*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books 1994.
- Dyson, Michael Eric. *Is Bill Cosby Right?: Or has the Black Middle Class Lost its Mind?*. New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2005.
- Dyson, Michael Eric. *Tears We Cannot Stop: A Sermon to White America*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2017.
- Dyson, Michael Eric. *The Michael Eric Dyson Reader*. New York: Civitas Books, 2004.
- Dyson, Michael Eric. *Why I Love Black Women*. New York: Civitas Books, 2004.
- Edmondson, Ron. "5 Mistakes Pastors Make With Church Finances." Facts & Trends. April 13, 2015. <https://factsandtrends.net/2015/04/13/top-5-mistakes-pastors-make-with-church-finances/>.
- Edwards, Korie L. *The Elusive Dream: The Power Of Race In Interracial Churches*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

- Ellison, Gregory C., II. *Cut Dead But Still Alive: Caring For African American Young Men*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013.
- Emerson, Michael O., and Christian Smith. *Divided By Faith: Evangelical Religion And The Problem Of Race In America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Evans, Colin. *Great Feuds in History: Ten of the Liveliest Disputes Ever*. New York: Fall River Press, 2001.
- Federal Writer's Project for the State of Connecticut, and the Milford Tercentenary Committee. *History Of Milford, Connecticut 1639-1939*. Bridgeport: Press of Braunworth & Co., 1939.
- Felder, Cain Hope. *Troubling Biblical Waters: Race, Class, and Family*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1990.
- Flake, Floyd H., Elaine McCollins Flake, and Edwin C. Reed. *African American Church Management Handbook*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2005.
- Forman, James, Jr. *Locking Up Our Own: Crime And Punishment in Black America*. New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2017.
- Fox, Zeni. *New Ecclesial Ministry: Lay Professionals Serving the Church*. Revised ed. Franklin: Sheed & Ward, 2002.
- Frazier, E. Franklin. *Black Bourgeoisie: The Book that Brought the Shock of Self-Revelation to Middle-Class Blacks in America*. New York: Free Press, 1997.
- Frederick, Marla F. *Between Sundays: Black Women and Everyday Struggles*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.
- Freedman, Samuel G. *Upon This Rock: The Miracles of a Black Church*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1994.
- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy Of The Oppressed*. 30th Anniversary ed. Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Continuum, 2000.
- Gafney, Wil. "The Atlatiana Jefferson shooting in Fort Worth shows black people, again, that we aren't safe here." NBC News. October 17, 2019.
<https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/atlatiana-jefferson-shooting-fort-worth-shows-black-people-again-we-ncna1067831>.
- Gates, Henry Louis, Jr., and Cornel West. *The Future Of The Race*. New York: Vintage Books, 1997.
- Gates, Henry Louis, Jr., and June Cross. "The Two Nations Of Black America." PBS. February 10, 1998.
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/race/etc/script.html>.
- Gates, Henry Louis, Jr., and Maria Tatar, eds. *The Annotated African American Folktales*. New York: Liveright Publishing, 2018.

- Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. "100 Amazing Facts About The Negro: The Truth Behind '40 Acres And A Mule.'" PBS. Accessed December 10, 2020.
<https://www.pbs.org/wnet/african-americans-many-rivers-to-cross/history/the-truth-behind-40-acres-and-a-mule/>.
- Ginsburg, Ruth Bader. *My Own Words*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016.
- Gjelten, Tom. "Multiracial Congregations May Not Bridge Racial Divide." NPR. July 17, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/2020/07/17/891600067/multiracial-congregations-may-not-bridge-racial-divide>.
- Gladwell, Malcolm. *David And Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2013.
- Goldingay, John. *Models For Interpretation Of Scripture*. Toronto, ON: Clements Publishing Group, 2004.
- Graham, Lawrence Otis. *Our Kind Of People: Inside America's Black Upper Class*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2000.
- Grant, Adam. *Originals: How Non-Conformists Move The World*. New York: Penguin Books, 2017.
- Grant, Jacquelyn. *White Women's Christ And Black Women's Jesus: Feminist Christology and Womanist Response*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989.
- Griffin, D. Darrell. *Navigating Pastoral Leadership In The Transition Zone*. Chicago: MMGI Books, 2012.
- Gula, Richard M. *Ethics in Pastoral Ministry*. Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1996.
- Hamad, Michael. "State's Black leaders and pastors react with dismay to suggestion by Connecticut governor that Black churches should help lead support for COVID-19 vaccine." Hartford Courant. September 13, 2020.
<https://www.courant.com/coronavirus/hc-news-coronavirus-lamont-working-with-black-churches-vaccine-20200913-3yodarucfzaizazzxvuz6sv2pe-story.html>.
- Hamilton, Charles V. *The Black Preacher in America*. New York: William Morrow & Company, 1972.
- Harris, James H. *Pastoral Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.
- Hill, Kenneth H. *Religious Education in the African American Tradition*. Saint Louis: Chalice Press, 2007.
- Hobson, Mellody. "Color blind or color brave?." Filmed 2014 at TED2014, Vancouver, BC. Video, 13:54.
https://www.ted.com/talks/mellody_hobson_color_blind_or_color_brave#t-105656.

- Hopkins, Dwight N., and George C. L. Cummings, eds. *Cut Loose Your Stammering Tongue: Black Theology in the Slave Narrative*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991.
- Hopkins, Dwight N. *Down, Up, and Over: Slave Religion and Black Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000.
- Hopkins, Dwight N. *Heart And Head: Black Theology Past, Present, and Future*. New York: Palgrave, 2002.
- Howard, Gregory. *Black Sacred Rhetoric*. Mountain Home: BorderStone Press, 2010.
- Hughes, Langston. *The Collected Poems Of Langston Hughes*, edited by Arnold Rampersad and David Roessel. New York: Vintage Books, 1995.
- Hunter, G. Shawn. *Small Acts Of Leadership: 12 Intentional Behaviors That Lead to Big Impact*. New York: Routledge, 2016.
- Johnson, Jenna. "Donald Trump to African American and Hispanic voters: 'What Do You Have To Lose?.'" *The Washington Post*. August 22, 2016.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2016/08/22/donald-trump-to-african-american-and-hispanic-voters-what-do-you-have-to-lose/?arc404=true>.
- Johnson, Kimberly P. *The Womanist Preacher: Proclaiming Womanist Rhetoric from the Pulpit*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017.
- Jude 3 Project. "Exclusivity vs Inclusivity: Is Jesus The Only Way?." November 16, 2018. Video, 51:10. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zswFQ0Vacw>.
- Jude 3 Project. "Paul's Sexual Ethics." October 30, 2019. Video, 1:26:50.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NlkomtAX6o8>.
- Jude 3 Project. "Preaching To Black Millennials." Preaching to Black Millennials. September 28, 2019. Video, 1:38:51.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSxHOs1yzQE>.
- Jude 3 Project. "The Divided Mind of the Church." October 17, 2019. Video, 1:14:56.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LoN7nUoFRcg>.
- Kendi, Ibram X. *Stamped From The Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*. New York: Bold Type Books, 2017.
- King, Martin Luther, Jr. "Letter From A Birmingham Jail [King, Jr.]," edited by Ali B. Ali-Dinar. African Studies Center - University of Pennsylvania. Accessed December 10, 2020.
https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html.
- Kinnaman, David, and Gabe Lyons. *unChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007.

- Landry, Bart. *The New Black Middle Class in the Twenty-First Century*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2018.
- LaRue, Cleophus J. *Power In The Pulpit: How America's Most Effective Black Preachers Prepare Their Sermons*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.
- LaRue, Cleophus J. *The Heart of Black Preaching*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000.
- Lee, Morgan. "What Ahmaud Arbery's Death Recalls About Lynching and Church History." Christianity Today. May 13, 2020.
<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/may-web-only/ahmaud-arbery-lynching-african-americans-christians-respond.html>.
- Lemon, Jason. "Evangelical Pastor Claims People in Heaven Are 'Crying Out' About Voter Fraud: 'Angels Have Been Dispatched.'" Newsweek. November 17, 2020.
<https://www.newsweek.com/evangelical-pastor-claims-people-heaven-are-crying-out-about-voter-fraud-angels-have-been-1548178>.
- Liebow, Elliot. *Tally's Corner: A Study Of Negro Streetcorner Men*. 2nd ed. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003.
- Light, Alan, ed. *The Vibe History of Hip Hop*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 1999.
- Loewen, James W. *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything your American History Textbook Got Wrong*. New York: Atria, 2007.
- Lummis, Adair T. "'Heart And Head' in Reaching Pastors of Black Churches." Paper presented at the Annual Meetings of the Association for the Sociology of Religion, Montreal, QC, August 2006.
http://hirr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/lummis_article5.html.
- Mathis, Dara T. "The Church's Black Exodus." The Atlantic. October 11, 2020.
<http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2020/10/why-black-parishioners-are-leaving-churches/616588>.
- Maxwell, John C. *The 21 Irrefutable Laws Of Leadership: Follow Them and People will Follow You*. 10th anniversary ed. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007.
- McCray, Walter Arthur. *The Black Presence in the Bible and the TABLE OF NATIONS GENESIS 10:1-32: With emphasis on the Hamitic Genealogical line from a Black Perspective*. Chicago: Black Light Fellowship, 1990.
- McIntosh, Gary L. *One Size Doesn't Fit All: Bringing Out the Best in Any Size Church*. Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell Company, 2003.
- McLoughlin, Pamela. "The price is always right at the Milford 'Clothes Closet.'" New Haven Register. Last modified August 17, 2010.
<https://www.nhregister.com/news/article/The-price-is-always-right-at-the-Milford-Clothes-11617063.php>.

- McMickle, Marvin. *Where Have All The Prophets Gone?: Reclaiming Prophetic Preaching in America*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2006.
- McMickle, Marvin A. *Preaching to the Black Middle Class: Words of Challenge, Words of Hope*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2000.
- Meacham, Jon. *The Soul Of America: The Battle for Our Better Angels*. New York: Random House, 2018.
- Mehta, Hemant. "Imitating Jesus, Preacher Flips Table in Reaction to Supposed Election Fraud." Friendly Atheist. November 23, 2020.
<https://friendlyatheist.patheos.com/2020/11/23/imitating-jesus-preacher-flips-table-in-reaction-to-supposed-election-fraud/>.
- Mitchell, Henry H. *Celebration & Experience in Preaching*. Revised ed. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990.
- Moss, Otis, III. *Blue Note Preaching in a Post-Soul World: Finding Hope in an Age of Despair*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015.
- Normen, Elizabeth J., ed. *African American Connecticut Explored*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2013.
- Oakman, Douglas E. *Jesus, Debt, and the Lord's Prayer: First-Century Debt and Jesus' Intentions*. Eugene: Cascade Books, 2014.
- Obama, Barack. *A Promised Land*. New York: Crown, 2020.
- Obama, Barack. *The Audacity Of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream*. New York: Vintage Books, 2008.
- Obama, Michelle. *Becoming*. New York: Crown Publishing, 2018.
- Oden, Thomas C. *Pastoral Theology: Essentials Of Ministry*. New York: HarperOne, 1983.
- Okholm, Dennis L., ed. *The Gospel In Black & White: Theological Resources for Racial Reconciliation*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997.
- Ortoleva, Daniel. "Reverend Charles D. Walker." Milford Hall of Fame. Accessed July 1, 2020. <http://milfordhalloffame.org/walker-reverend-charles-d>.
- Paris, Peter J. *The Social Teaching of the Black Churches*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985.
- Parker, Evelyn L. *Trouble Don't Last Always: Emancipatory Hope Among African American Adolescents*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2003.
- Pelikan, Jaroslav. *Jesus Through The Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.

- Persell, Caroline Hodges. *Education and Inequality: The Roots and Results of Stratification in American Schools*. New York: Free Press, 1979.
- Piketty, Thomas. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer. Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2017.
- Pimpmaster Pete. "Nig's Pond." Urban Dictionary. 2007.
<https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Nig%27s%20Pond>.
- Pinn, Anthony B. *Why, Lord?: Suffering And Evil In Black Theology*. New York: Continuum, 1999.
- Proctor, Samuel D. *The Certain Sound of the Trumpet*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1994.
- Raboteau, Albert J. *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Rainer, Thom S. *Who Moved My Pulpit?: Leading Change in the Church*. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2016.
- Raushenbush, Paul Brandeis. "Trayvon Martin 'Not Guilty' Verdict Sparks Hoodie Sunday At Black Churches." Huffpost. Last modified July 14, 2013.
https://www.huffpost.com/entry/trayvon-martin-hoodie-sunday_n_3594302.
- Reimers, David M. *White Protestantism and the Negro*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1965.
- Remnick, David. *King Of The World*. New York: Random House, 1998.
- Rochester, Shawn D. *The Black Tax: The Cost of Being Black in America*. Southbury: Good Steward Publishing, 2017.
- Rothstein, Richard. *The Color Of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*. New York: Liveright, 2017.
- Ruff, Matt. *Lovecraft Country*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2017.
- Sanders, James A. *The Monotheizing Process: Its Origins and Development*. Eugene: Cascade Books, 2014.
- Schlesinger, Arthur M., Jr. *The Disuniting Of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society*. New York: W. W. Norton Company, 1998.
- Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. "Charles D. Walker Papers." New York Public Library. Accessed December 10, 2020.
<http://archives.nypl.org/scm/20588>.
- Sensing, Tim. *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2011.

- Shalal, Andrea. "After George Floyd's death, a groundswell of religious activism." Reuters. June 9, 2020. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-minneapolis-police-usa-religion/after-george-floyds-death-a-groundswell-of-religious-activism-idUSKBN23G1FS>.
- Shange, Ntozake. *For Colored Girls who have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf*. New York: Scribner, 1977.
- Shelton, Jason E., and Michael O. Emerson. *Blacks and Whites in Christian America: How Racial Discrimination Shapes Religious Convictions*. New York: New York University Press, 2012.
- Sims, Darryl D. *Evangelizing and Empowering the Black Male*. Chicago: MMGI Books, 2009.
- Sims, Darryl D. *Sound The Trumpet Again*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2005.
- Sinek, Simon. *Leaders Eat Last*. New York: Penguin, 2017.
- Smiley, Tavis, ed. *The Covenant With Black America*. Chicago: Third World Press, 2006.
- Smith, Christine Marie. *Preaching Justice: Ethnic and Cultural Perspectives*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2008.
- Smith, Efrem, and Phil Jackson. *The Hip-Hop Church: Connecting with the Movement Shaping Our Culture*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005.
- Smith, Mitzi J. *Womanist Sass and Talk Back: Social (In)Justice, Intersectionality, and Biblical Interpretation*. Eugene: Cascade Books, 2018.
- Stanfield, John H., III, ed. *Rethinking Race And Ethnicity in Research Methods*. New York: Routledge, 2011.
- Stanley, Andy. "April 2019: Generational Diversity in the Workplace, Part 1." Produced by Andy Stanley. *Andy Stanley Leadership Podcast*. April 5, 2019. Podcast, 30:19. <https://andystanley.com/podcast/generational-diversity-in-the-workplace/>.
- Stanley, Andy. "May 2019: Generational Diversity In The Workplace, Part 2." Produced by Andy Stanley. *Andy Stanley Leadership Podcast*. May 23, 2019. Podcast, 42:31. <https://andystanley.com/podcast/may-2019-generational-diversity-in-the-workplace-part-2/>.
- Starling, David I. *Hermeneutics as Apprenticeship: How the Bible Shapes Our Interpretive Habits and Practices*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016.
- Streeter, Dawn-Marie. "Pressing for Change Of Venerable Names." The New York Times. February 26, 1995. <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/02/26/nyregion/pressing-for-change-of-venerable-names.html>.

- Sullivan, Laura, Tatjana Meschede, Lars Dietrich, and Thomas Shapiro. "The Racial Wealth Gap: Why Policy Matters." Demos. 2015.
https://www.demos.org/sites/default/files/publications/RacialWealthGap_2.pdf.
- Sutton, Bob. "What Great Leaders Do." Video course at Stanford University. Accessed December 10, 2020. <https://alison.com/course/what-great-leaders-do>.
- The Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change. "MLK: Beyond Vietnam - A Time To Break Silence." July 6, 2015. Video, 56:48.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AJhgXKGldUk>.
- Thomas, Frank. "A Conversation With Dr. Howard-John Wesley hosted by Dr. Frank A. Thomas." February 8, 2019. Video, 1:01:50.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1a-6CqrnkxE&t=3s>.
- Thomas, Frank. "Preaching of Black Women and Womanists - #AfricanAmericanPreaching Ep21." May 30, 2017. Video, 5:01.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HDMUvT8Tg9s>.
- Thomas, Frank A. *How to Preach A Dangerous Sermon*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2018.
- Thomas, Frank A. *Introduction to the Practice of African American Preaching*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016.
- Thomas, Frank A. *They Like to Never Quit Praisin' God: The Role of Celebration in Preaching*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2013.
- Thurman, Howard. *Jesus and the Disinherited*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1976.
- Trussell, Jacqueline. "The Convention Movement Of The Black Baptist Church." Black and Christian. Accessed December 10, 2020.
<http://www.blackandchristian.com/articles/academy/trussell1.shtml>.
- Turman, Eboni Marshall. "A Theological Statement From the Black Church on Juneteenth." Colorlines. June 19, 2020.
<https://www.colorlines.com/articles/theological-statement-black-church-juneteenth>.
- Vibe Magazine. "VIBE Presents: Tupac's 'Lost' Interview." September 15, 2016. Video, 24:17. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4zAdiWMG1Q>.
- Walsh, Bill, Steve Jamison, and Craig Walsh. *The Score Takes Care of Itself: My Philosophy of Leadership*. New York: Portfolio, 2009.
- Warnock, Raphael G. *The Divided Mind of the Black Church: Theology, Piety & Public Witness*. New York: New York University Press, 2014.

Washington, Harriet A. *Medical Apartheid: A Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from colonial Times to the Present*. New York: Anchor Books, 2008.

West, Cornel. *Race Matters*. New York: Vintage Books, 1994.

Wiley, Ralph. *Why Black People Tend To Shout: Cold Facts and Wry Views from a Black Man's World*. New York: Penguin Books, 1991.

Wilkerson, Isabel. *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story Of America's Great Migration*. New York: Vintage Books, 2011.

Willimon, William H. *Shaped By The Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991.

Wright, Almeda M. *The Spiritual Lives of Young African Americans*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Yamaguchi, Kazuo. "Black–White Differences in social mobility in the past 30 years: A latent-class regression analysis." *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 27, no. 2 (June 2009): 65-78. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rssm.2009.01.003>.

APPENDIX B: PRE-PROJECT CONVERSATIONS

As a growing number of professionals have joined or visited our church over the years, I have initiated conversations to learn what they were looking for in a church. I aim to encourage honest conversation, be welcoming to suggestions, and open to questions. The following notes are some of the most memorable. All names have been changed and descriptions muted to preserve anonymity.

One professional named Michael inquired if we had a mentoring program. He and many of his colleagues would be interested in educating young Black men on life skills. Prior to the pandemic, when offered an opportunity to help advise a graduating college student who needed some counsel, he was willing to make himself available whenever the student had time. This sentiment was shared by two other visiting businessmen. Both James and Patrick specifically inquired about opportunities to guide and advise Black boys or young men.

When Patrick began to regularly attend the worship services, he expressed a desire to help others with the financial success that he gained over the years. However, there was clear disappointment with our inability to provide suitable options. He also desires for his wife and children to have opportunities to help others as well. James, more cautious than Patrick, refrained from attempting full immersion. Instead, after observation, he inquired about our women's and children's ministries, both lagging in involvement at that time. Yet, after finding us wanting in his desired areas, he still committed to financially support the Church due to his support of the church's vision, "come to not only have church, but to be the church."

Stacey, who left another contemporary multicultural church, joined First Baptist because of its familial environment. With her family as priority, she sought us out to anchor her family in a Christian environment that was safe and relevant for her children. However, as a high-level executive, she also addressed her need for ministry that was relevant to her as a Black woman who operated in primarily white spaces, her desire to be a part of a church that participates in community service, and operationally, to see excellence and accountability.

Toya, cautious and observant, shared one critique, a reoccurring observation. She highlighted the absence of a strong women's ministry. She also expressed concern about our operational professionalism. She felt that First Baptist should make a stronger effort to strive for excellence in professional execution.

Bria is pleased with what the church offers. Therefore, her suggestions were not critiques as much as encouragement. The church being one of the few Black communities of which she is a part, she desires more focus on the church's history and its commitment to fighting against injustice for Black people.

Alexis, like Bria, does not have much negative critique. Her interest in the church is anchored in its, what she identifies as, traditional Black Baptist worship style. Reminiscent of her experience attending church further south, the nostalgia of worship comforts her in a world where she feels many churches are desperately trying to avoid looking like "church."

Serena's suggestions are birthed from the same desire. After spending some years living in various cities due to work, she was disappointed in her inability to find a church that worshiped in the style in which she grew up. After landing in the Milford area, she

was pleased to find First Baptist. She believes that we should continue to offer prayer, scripture reading, and other liturgical moments that some more contemporary churches have abandoned. She is happy to know that her children will be raised in a family oriented, spiritual environment.

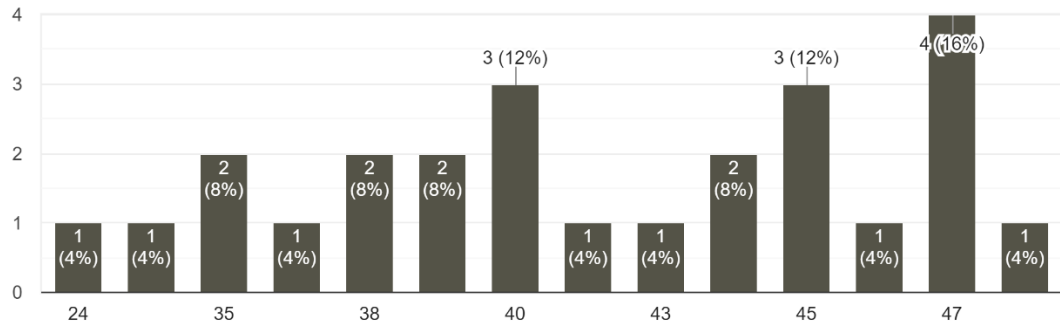
Melissa feels that the church is severely lacking in its ability to be relevant to her life. Although she doesn't mind the worship style, she desires a more daily-relevant focus. She would like more ministries that deal with social justice efforts, Bible-based life advice, and spiritual growth.

Simone came to First Baptist after moving to Connecticut. She was very active in her previous church, leading various women's ministry efforts and creating a space for professional dialogue. She was attracted to First Baptist because of the music, the preaching, and the familiar worship style. However, she joined with the expectation that she would be able to bring her experiences and ministry ideas to First Baptist. She recognized that the church had a good communal base but needed to do more to become relevant. She expressed a desire to support the reactivation of a women's ministry, the creation of a telephone prayer line, and sessions on leadership skills.

APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

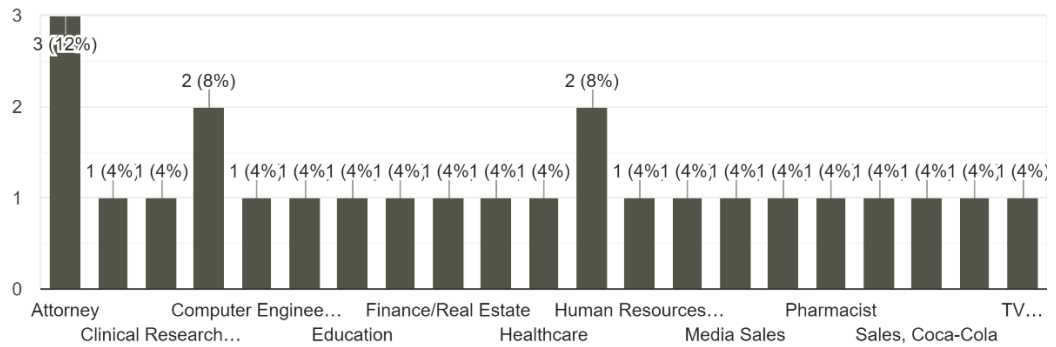
Age

25 responses



Profession/Area of professional expertise

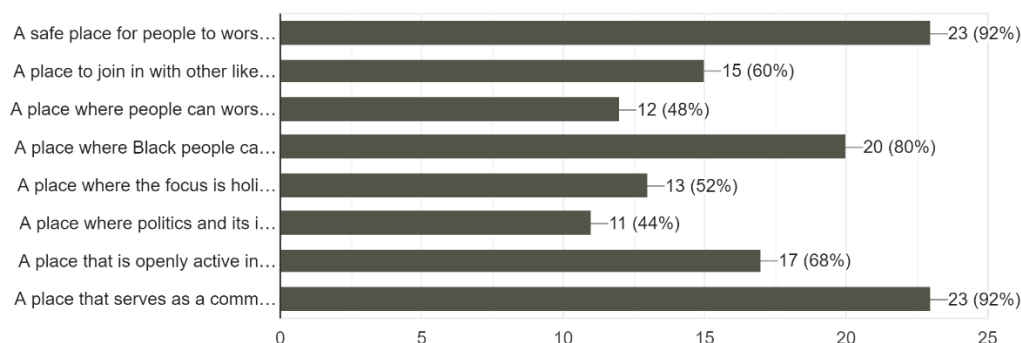
25 responses



Role of the Black Church

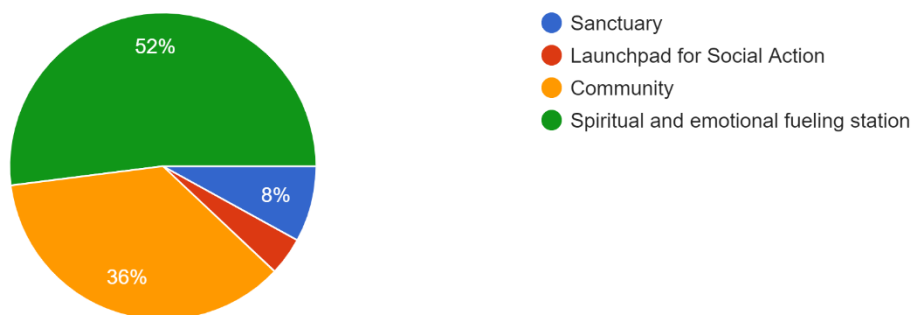
Please mark all statements that reflect your beliefs about what the Black Church should be:

25 responses



Although it may be difficult, what singular word or phrase best describes what you feel the Church should be?

25 responses



Please share any other thoughts about what you believe the role of the Black Church should be.

- While I don't think the church's main role should be political, I do think that government advocacy for the needs of the community is part of serving the community.
- Community
- It's a spiritual community nurturing the physical and spiritual needs of the family under God.
- A conduit to provide for its constituents and the community spiritually, mentally and physically.
- To provide a strong spiritual foundation for children and young adults.

- Community embodies all the other options in my opinion. Feeling a sense of belonging as well as food for the soul and working with others to make a difference in the lives of those in the community are focuses of the Black church I think should exist.
- The Black church should support/serve its own in and out and outside of the 4 walls. That support and service should feed spiritual, physical, social, and emotional needs.
- To continue the black perspective as a priority but clearly be open for non-black people to join
- A safe, non-judgmental environment where people can learn and grow in their journey to build their relationship with God. An environment where people feel like they belong and are a part of a community. Provides a variety of opportunities to be involved both in the church and out of the church.
- Evolving with the times but maintaining core purpose and principles
- Safe haven
- I don't believe the role of the Black Church should be any different than what the Bible says- partnering with Christ to grow the kingdom of God. The role will evolve depending on the needs of the people who are the church and the call to action given by the Holy Spirit.
- The foundation for our children to grow and thrive.
- A place for individuals at all stages of their faith to grow both spiritually and politically in a warm and welcoming environment.

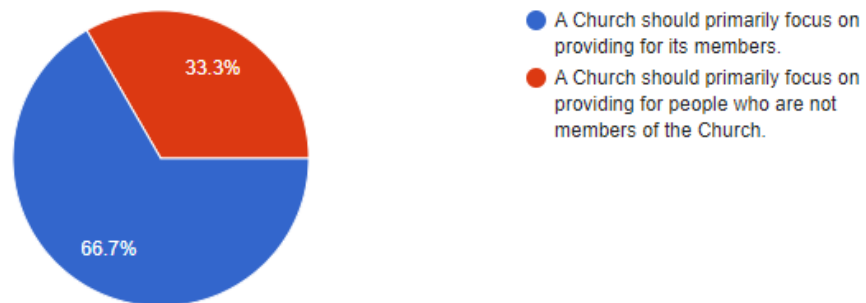
Which of the following best expresses your personal feelings about the Black Church?

23 responses



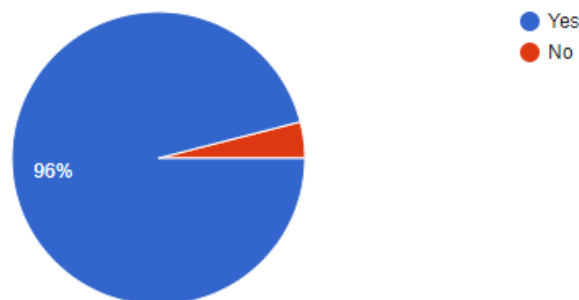
Which of the following best reflects who you believe the Church should serve?

21 responses



Do you believe that the Church should work with other non-Christian communities of faith to deal with social issues and concerns?

25 responses



Please explain why?

- Our work in collaboration is evidence of Christ's work through us. He went beyond His borders and directed us to do the same.
- First, I think the black church should focus on "understanding" the black community to effectively serve it. This doesn't always mean "relate" but it would certainly help to have members of the community that can relate in active church roles. Also, this doesn't have to exclude the non-black members of the physical community. Second, I don't think the church's "primary" focus should be members or non-members. The church can serve its members and serve its community as equal priorities (irrespective of whether all community members are church members and / or all church members live in the community). Reworking with non-Christian organizations, I think it's ok to maximize resources and impact when there's a common goal. As long as the other

organization is a respectful partner, I think it's ok to work together on certain critical issues that will benefit the overall community.

- Because we are all God's children and need to work together to achieve real progress
- Together we are stronger. Also, other religious groups have had similar struggles as Christians, so we could benefit from learning from each other's experiences.
- I think it really depends on what these issues and concerns are to really be able to fully answer this question.
- If you are only focusing on your members, it is almost like "preaching to the choir".
- Social issues impact everyone. The church should be a collaborative entity that seeks to work with all groups to serve the community and create a better world.
- Because we can learn a lot from each other.
- We are called to try to live in peace and love our neighbors. Try. We are not to conform to non-Christian ideas, but to make the effort to show love and kindness especially when it is difficult.
- It takes EVERYONE to be and/or create the changes that we want to see.
- Pain knows no limits and has no boundaries. A man in need, is man in need. Religion has been and still ends up being at the center of many conflicts around the world. If living in a peaceful world and achieving harmony is a goal, then the church should be open to working with anyone that is interested in addressing social issues and concerns.
- Social issues do not only impact Black people, people of faith, or people of one particular faith.
- Solutions should be born from those who reflect the values of those who will be affected.
- All communities of faith need assistance in some way
- Excluding members of other faiths serves only to limit the church's access to a diversity of viewpoint, which is critical to success. Additionally, cutting oneself off from other communities reduces the overall number of people coordinating on a particular social issue or concern. A tried-and-true tactic of defeating an enemy is to divide and then conquer. Why would we willingly divide ourselves?
- Because social issues will not be corrected and addressed working in silos.
- It should not be run in isolation or take part in a zero-sum game
- We shouldn't let one's religion get in the way of progress.
- The Church should be a part of the collective solution and show partnership/allyship with appropriate organizations.
- I believe that the church should be open to working with members of other faiths in efforts to lead by example and be open to other opinions outside the

community. This will lead to a positive change when fighting both social injustice and also serve as a way of educating one another.

Church Leadership and Style

What leadership qualities do you look for in a leader when making the decision to become a part of an organization overall (church, other nonprofits, etc.)?

- Honesty, integrity and the ability to relate to me
- Relatability, Authenticity, Sincere Reverence to God Almighty
- Transparent, motivational, effective, respectful, and holding a genuine belief in our charge.
- Ability to relate to younger generation, inspiring, collaborative
- Honestly, integrity, sincerity, modesty
- The leader takes time to know my name and who I am, approachable, visible, honest, has real knowledge in the area
- A leader who leads by example. Who is not detached from their congregation. Knows and lives the word
- If a leader motivates, is empathetic, seeks to understand other's perspective while also considering what is required to accomplish the org's mission, drives clarity and remains optimistic I am inclined to join that leader's team.
- Passion
- Honest, Trustworthy, Diligent, Relatable
- Wisdom, transparency.
- Not perfect, but honest, engaging, good steward of finances, great communicator,
- A willingness to learn, with experience in active listening to understand and not to respond.
- The ability to meet people where they are, not where they would like them to be is important.
- Transformational leadership, strategic, servant, vulnerable, capable, and educated
- not to be judgmental. to let people take their time and find their own path to join and how to participate
- An open mind, strong intellectual ability, deliberate and well-reasoned decision-making, and efficiency
- Respectful, Strong moral foundations, Dedicated to advancing and promoting the Well-being of others
- someone who can inspire, who has integrity, empathy, vision for the future
- Being authentic and relatable
- Message, relationship,

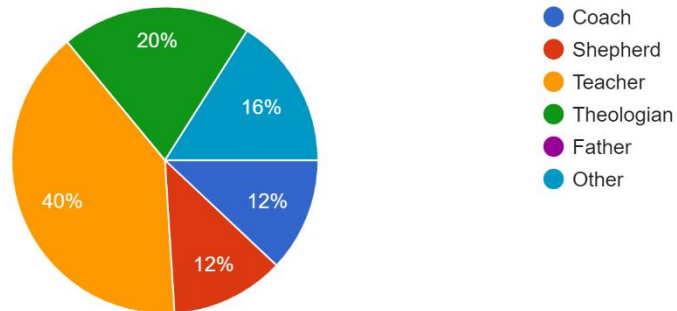
- Compassion, inspiration, authenticity

Do you view church leadership to be with the pastor alone or with other governing bodies within the church?

- Other governing bodies
- Governing bodies that look to the pastor
- Pastor together with other governing bodies
- The pastor
- Both
- With other governing bodies
- I think church leadership starts with the Pastor but includes other governing bodies in the church.
- Other governing bodies as well.
- With other governing bodies
- With other governing bodies.
- The Pastor and other governing bodies
- I believe that is up to the Pastor.
- Pastor and governing bodies
- Leadership never resides in one person or any sole governing body. There may be organizational hierarchies of managers for operational purposes, but leaders are chosen by the people that choose to follow them. And people follow those they connect with regardless of organizational position.
- Both...I expect for there to be systems of checks and balances amongst the leadership of the church.
- Not really sure...I think the pastor alone.. but a governing body could give more structure and balance
- I don't know that I view church leadership as either with the pastor alone or with governing bodies. I imagine it varies from church to church. My personal preference is that a leader (such as a pastor) empowers individuals (or groups/bodies) and cultivates future leaders or that governing bodies are freely elected and have the ability to impact the direction of the church.
- Church leadership should be a partnership with the pastor leading the church body but accepting and welcoming advise and guidance from Deacons, Elders, Members, and Governing Bodies.
- Pretty much the lead Pastor
- With everyone
- Other governing bodies.
- Governing bodies of the church

Which of the following best reflects how you understand the spiritual role of the Pastor?

25 responses

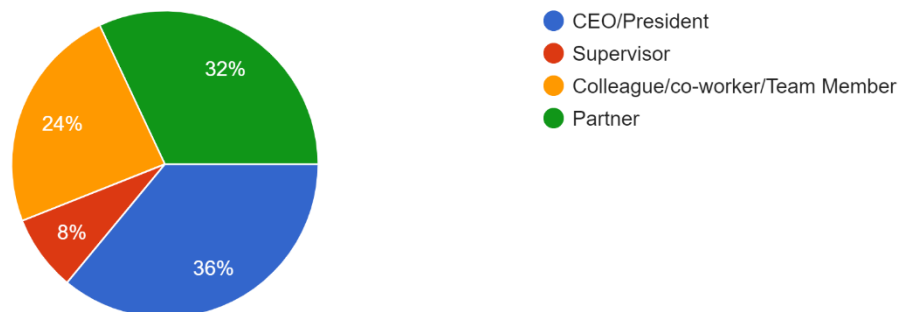


If you selected “other”, please describe how you understand the spiritual role of the Pastor in your own words?

- It's a combination: Vessel under God's call that studies, teaches, and guides a congregation
- Spiritual advisor and service leader

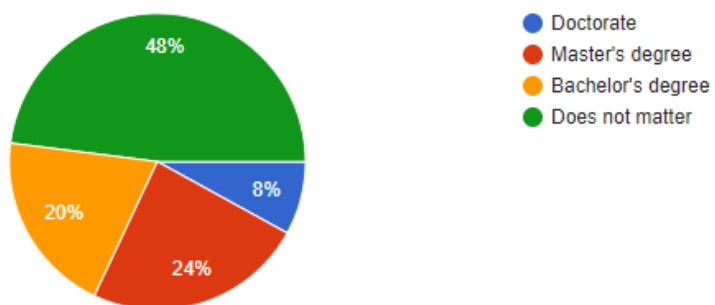
Which of the following best reflects what you believe is the best Leadership style for a Pastor?

25 responses



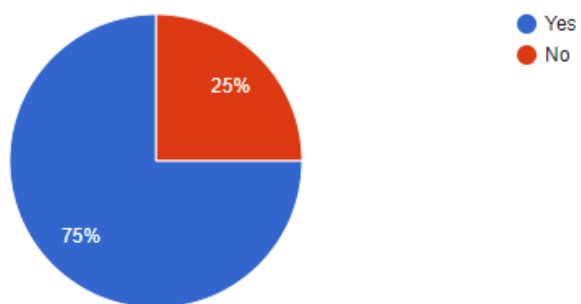
What is the lowest theological education you would prefer the Pastor to have?

25 responses



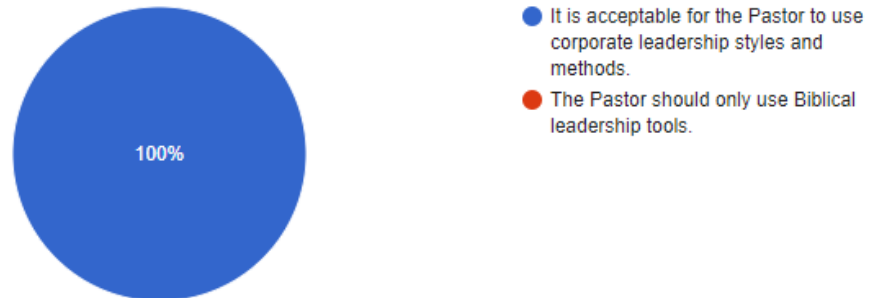
Do you prefer the Pastor to have professional work experience outside of ministry?

24 responses



Is it acceptable for the Pastor to use corporate leadership styles and methods, or should the Pastor only focus on Biblical leadership tools?

23 responses



Is the age or gender of the Pastor important? If you answered "yes," what is your preference?

- No
- Yes.. around my age group 45-55
- No their age and gender does not matter. However, gender equity in the pulpit is important.
- Yes, I prefer younger for a more modern approach to today's issues for me and children, but "old enough" to have some experience under their wings.
- It is not important, but I have found that sometimes messages may be more relatable when the Pastor is closer to my age.
- Not important.
- No, as long as they are relatable to all
- somewhat, has to be relatable and flexible to change
- not important
- No.

Personal Views

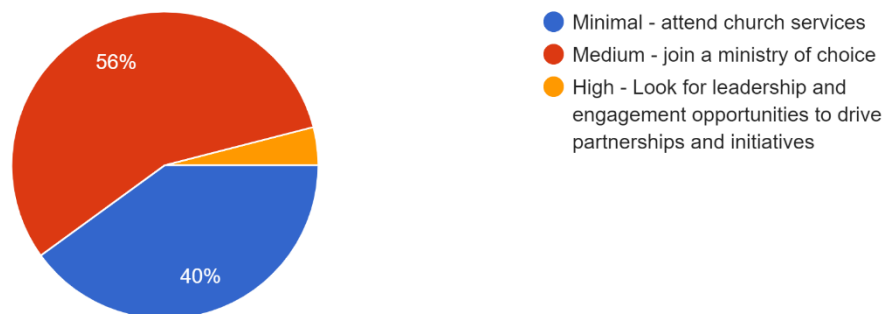
What are the top 3 qualities you personally look for in a church? Please list them in order from most important to least.

- Welcoming, motivating, and non-judgmental
- Authenticity, acceptance, foster belonging

- Quality messaging, warm environment, meaningful worship and service opportunities
- Denomination, community/familial feel/ size
- bible based, diverse, tech savvy
- Friendly members, location, organized
- Strong leadership, community involvement and diversity
- Welcoming, Strong Praise and Worship, Focus on Youth Ministry
- Bible based teaching, organized, financially responsible.
- Teaching, worship, community
- Biblically sound 2. Committed to social justice/action 3. Knowing that outreach is a significant line item in the budget relative to administrative expenses
- Politically progressive, intelligent, welcoming
- Sense of Community, Sermons that resonate and stick with you throughout the week, and programs for children and youth.
- welcoming to diverse set of people/ideas, more focused on new testament, less rigid and mindful of people's time and flexibility of worship post-covid
- Vibe, realistic approach, family friendly
- Relatability, Congregation, Relationships for my children
- Authenticity & community

What are your Church engagement expectations?

25 responses



Are there ministries and activities that are a "must have for you to attend a church?"
If your answer is "yes," please share what they may be.

- No
- Praise and worship
- Ministries for children
- Yes, I would like opportunities for small groups either by age or gender or both

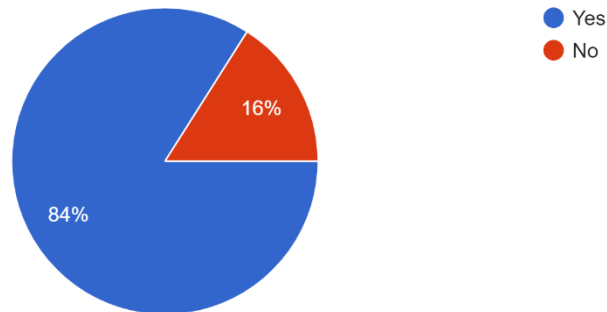
- no
- Yes, e-ministry, social action, community outreach (e.g. food banks, clothing drives, education, etc.)
- Health Ministry, Youth Ministry, and any Ministry that is focused on helping communities in need
- too many to list but in general helping the local community in any way possible (poverty, college ed, mentoring, finding partners, etc).
- Children's Ministry

Are there any church community activities that are of interest to you (i.e. Bible study, prayer, book club, men's/women's group, bowling, etc.)? If your answer is "yes," , please share what they may be.

- I'm involved in the social justice team ministry
- Not necessarily but I could be interested
- Sunday school and Bible study
- bible study and small life groups
- Bible study abs marriage/ parenting group
- Yes, book club, women's group, prayer partners
- Men's women's group. Outreach ministries to the less fortunate
- I like both educational ministries that focus on ensuring members understand their connection between our lives today and biblical principles as well as social ministries. I also love to see business related ministries in a church to support members businesses and/or encouraging usage of members' services and products.
- Community involvement
- Yes- Bible study, small groups, youth ministry/outreach
- Small groups
- no
- Bible study and revivals
- Bible study groups/plans that cater to various members' familiarity with the text.
- Women's Leadership Group, Parenting Group, Book Club
- Possibly a men's group to share non-religious talk and do activities.
- Men's group, bowling
- Yes, but I make myself fit in wherever the opportunity and my genuine interests align.
- Women's groups, mentorship, community service, book club

Do you believe that as a member of a church, you have a financial obligation?

25 responses



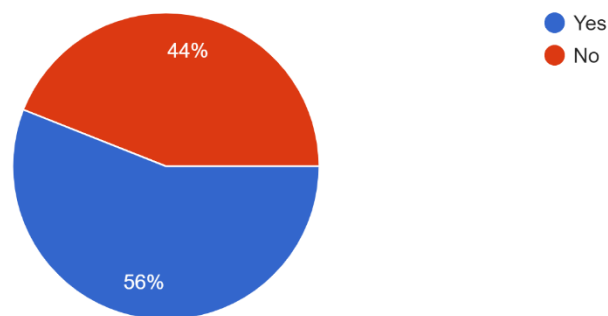
If you answered "yes," what is the obligation? If you answered "no," please explain why.

- 10%
- Consistent support and if I get a pay bump my increase is reflected in my giving
- Tithing is ideal but contributions below tithing are still appropriate.
- Whatever I can give.
- Tithe or give in a meaningful and consistent manner
- Tithe
- I feel that you should regularly give financially back to the church the bible says ten percent of your earnings but if you can't do that I think you should still give something.
- Obligation is to give back to the Lord, but we should be able to see the good works done by the church
- I don't believe in 10% to the church only because I give more than 10% across all Charities I support as well as supporting friends and family in need. But I understand a church needs financial support to exist. So perhaps a pledge annually per member but also identifying areas of need. However, ensuring the pastor is living at a particular standard is also not a focus of mine and I don't think is appropriate.
- Tithes, offering and assist with fundraising needs
- Tithes and offerings.
- Tithing
- Not sure, but the church requires funds for overhead just as any other place that is providing a service.
- Tithes (10% of income) and offering.

- To help the church and fundraising as much as you can
- To contribute an amount tailored to my family's ability that allows the church to achieve its transparent goals.
- My financial obligation is to give to the church so that the church can continue to serve others.
- yes and no. Depends on how transparent the church is with finances
- Giving is supposed to come from the heart. Saying obligated to give is a bit strong for me.
- What you are able to give while still fulfilling your financial obligations at home.

Does the church demographic need to match or heavily lean toward your personal demographic (i.e. age, young families, working professionals, etc.)?

25 responses



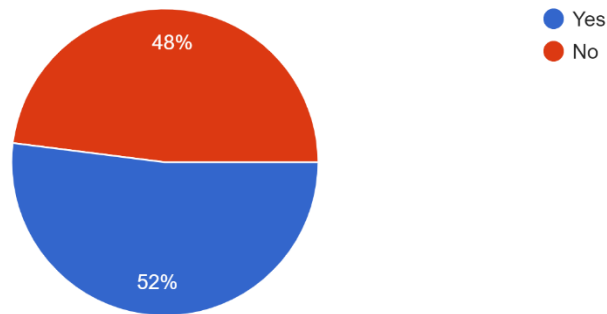
Does the size of the congregation matter? If your answer is "yes," what is your preferred congregation size (in your own words)?

- No
- Small to medium so the pastor has the opportunity to engage personally with me
- I prefer a church that is not too large. Too large feels less personal and intimate
- 100-200
- medium size
- Yes, medium sized...not too small, not a mega church feel.
- Just not too small.
- Yes... I'm not into mega. I think 1000-1500 at most or so members is a good size.
- Yes - preferable a medium sized congregation
- no
- Yes, I prefer medium to larger churches (>500 members).
- The above answer is no, but ideally there would be a large enough congregation that my age group would have peers (age wise)

- My preference is for a mid-sized or larger congregation.
- yes and no. Would not be good if skewed towards people who I cannot relate with or want to spend time with outside of church.
- small to medium
- No

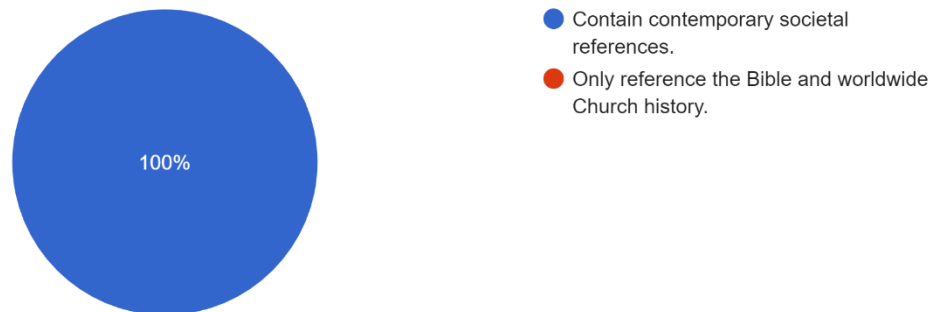
Would you travel more than 20 miles weekly to church?

25 responses



Which of the following best represents your preferences? You prefer the sermon to:

25 responses



What is your desired sermon message? Check all that apply.

- Personal encouragement
 - Responsibility to loving and helping others
 - The death and resurrection of Jesus
 - The advantages of having the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives
- Personal encouragement

Responsibility to loving and helping others
The death and resurrection of Jesus

- Personal encouragement
Responsibility to loving and helping others
The advantages of having the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives
- Personal encouragement
Responsibility to loving and helping others
- Responsibility to loving and helping others
The advantages of having the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives
- Personal encouragement
- teaching facts based on the new testament that relate to everyday life today

Regarding online worship experiences, besides the sermon, what do you look for when attending a virtual service (i.e. choir, scripture, etc.)?

- Praise and worship (choir)
- Scripture and prayer
- Sermon is primary and I don't know that scripture outside of the sermon is necessary (I prefer full context). I also like inspirational and emotional choir selections
- Scripture, music, open mic sharing of current happenings within the congregation
- bible study
- Praise and worship and announcements
- Music, engaging the audience
- Music ministers to my soul so is a must as well as the message.
- Interaction with other members of the church via chat feature or in the comments, scripture, musical selection
- Singing, technical quality
- Worship time, scripture, notes
- Ease of logging in, ease of giving, music/choir, professional/skilled videography and quality sound.
- Clear direction and smooth operation
- choir,
- If virtual you need to keep interest so more focus on political activism and current political environment (in relation to new testament)

- N/A
- message, choir is a plus... but message for sure.
- Choir, discussion/sermon with current societal references

What do you wish more churches offered online?

- Not sure
- Bible study (even when congregating in person is safe, this would be nice to offer remotely)
- small life groups
- Organized community service and outreach. Children's services.
- study groups, book clubs
- Gallery for fellowship via video.
- All main services (Sunday, Bible study, etc.), ways to give, weekly devotion or prayer activities, updated/maintained activity calendars
- A bible study plan and guide.
- opportunities to connect in smaller groups
- Yes, its good for all churches to be flexible in 2021 to survive
- N/A
- breakout rooms for discussions
- Yes

Critique

As a Black professional, what are some issues to which the Black Church needs to pay more attention?

- Racial injustice and inclusion
- Busy schedules sometimes require regular checkins. Often after a long day, week, we don't have the mental capacity to log into an evening meeting so we don't but we still need connection.
- Work-life balance, resourceful networking (understanding how to make connections that are mutually beneficial to the members and efficiently support church work), financial empowerment opportunities
- economic development
- Covid vaccine information, healthy habits, focus on education within our community
- What is happening in the community and schools, mental health
- Financial wellness, faith at work

- Educating our community regarding career and job opportunities, entrepreneurship and higher education.
- Supporting minority businesses
- Corporate giving opportunities and partnerships
- More black history. There could be an opportunity to address the lack of education, as it pertains to black history, that many school systems have when it comes to teaching the contributions and stories of survival and perseverance of the black community.
- Strengthening the Black family, offering human services for the community, social/political issues
- Length of the service. An hour should work. 15 minutes extra is fine
- Openness. The black church is shrinking rapidly because it can be insular.
- Being inclusive and welcoming to all, and understanding how to connect with youth and young people in a meaningful way that will keep them engaged and connected with their church family.
- Don't be so rigid, try to embrace change and keep topics relevant to the times. Bring in more youth for new ideas. Don't be afraid of some diversity, welcome it.
- Being overly judgmental and being out of touch
- Getting Black professionals back to Church, applying Church to current world situations/experiences, Emotional well-being, leadership opportunities....
- Professional development, mentorship opportunities, mental health

What are some common issues that disappoint you, offend you, or both, about the Black Church?

- It can feel closed to outsiders. You have to work harder to establish relationship.
- I'm not sure I can speak to common issues of the Black Church
- not reaching out to youth
- Unwillingness to evolve with the times and judgement/lack of acceptance
- Lack of engaging sermons, length of service, expectations to participate, time management
- Prosperity Churches that prey on members. Church leadership should reflect the members
- Mismanagement of monies, not connecting with the community and when members aren't connected with the community. I always want to feel a sense of belonging at church. No one should feel like an outsider at church, it shouldn't be cliquey.
- Hypocrisy
- The focus shifting from being a Christian who is black to being a black person who is Christian.

- Lack of community outreach and involvement, focus on tithes/offerings without accountability and transparency about the disbursement of funds, self-serving financially and in acts of service
- Lack of political progression. Suspicious and insular behavior.
- Lack of structure- churches with heavy turnover in leadership, Not being inclusive, sermons that lack depth.
- Lengthy church services, the feeling that most are attending to be seen vs being spiritually fulfilled. I worry that most people don't take the message home with them. Too much focus on old testament which can be UN-relatable to younger / scientifically driven folk. Too much gossip about church vs the message coming across. Needs to embrace more "come as you are".
- Speaking down to the youth
- Inability to move forward. Not embracing innovation.

If there was one thing that you could change about the Black Church to make it more attractive to you, what would it be?

- Not sure
- Timeliness
- more technology
- Larger focus on age appropriate child/teen ministry to help keep the next generation rooted in faith
- virtual options, early morning service, more opportunities to fellowship with people around my age, guest speakers outside of leadership (financial)
- Balance tradition with being contemporary.
- Increased diversity in thought. Black church isn't inclusive to all. Even if I'm not part of a marginalized group like LGBTQ, I always feel disconnected from a message that talks about this group as sinners. Interpreting the Bible to exclude is a turn off for me. So inclusivity is what I would change.
- Nothing.
- Deliver itself from restrictive dogma and oppression of its own people.
- See previous two responses.
- N/A
- Get younger and less rigid. Focus more on current events and tie that into the new testament with facts. Stay away from old testament. Embrace technology. Find easier / faster ways for people to attend and find valid reasons for them to stay engaged outside of church.
- Don't be afraid to speak to the current state of things. Make the "old" stories relatable to today.

- I have to say, I appreciate the virtual services....
- More sermons that relate to society, less biblical references during sermons in efforts to make it more relatable

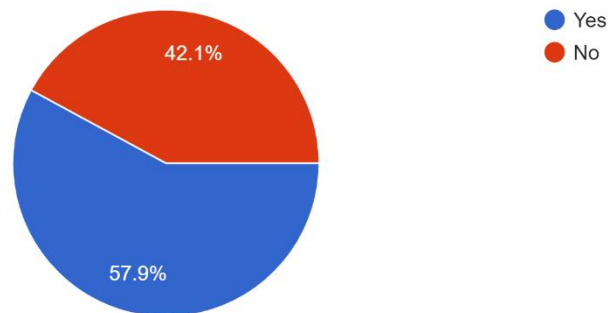
Conclusion

Thank you for your time and thoughtfulness. If you have any further comments about the Church or the self-study please write them below in the space provided. Also, If you have another minute, there are 5 optional questions on the next page.

- Good set of questions. I hope my thoughts help.
- No further comments.

Are you a member of a Church?

19 responses



If you answered no, what prevents or has prevented you from joining a Church?

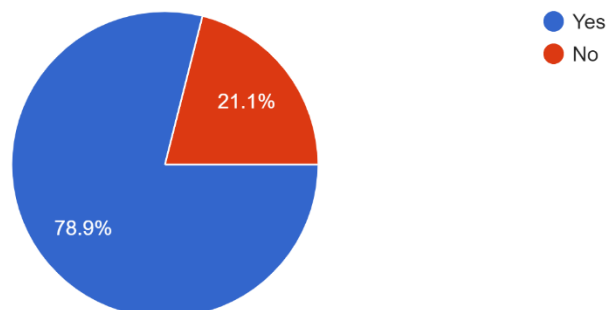
- Haven't found one that I connect with
- Recently relocated but looking for a church to join
- Just moved to a New area
- None local that I would want to join. Also im not sure joining a church officially is relevant.
- Nothing in particular. Work has always been a factor but other than that haven't felt the pull to join a specific church yet.
- Need to transition....

How do you envision church engagement to be post-pandemic?

- Careful congregating with zoom options.
- Back in person
- more virtual than pre covid
- More virtual engagement
- I think it will continue to grow. I love the church without walls concept. Those churches that do it effectively will grow membership and not lose.
- Virtual and in person, having experiences for all and increasing the diversity and inclusion.
- Virtual
- Higher and with further reach as a result of virtual services.
- I expect more people to join due to the hardships that they endured during the pandemic and being aware that it was God's grace that kept them!
- I believe that in-person attendance will be a challenge. People miss church, but may enjoy the flexibility and brevity of virtual engagement.
- The way it was pre-pandemic
- I imagine it will include a virtual option. There may be fewer members physically present each week.
- Many will be very excited to return to church in person again, I also believe the pandemic may have brought folks that were not as engaged in church to revisit the importance of their relationship with God and seeking the support a church family can provide.
- Churches who adapted will thrive to a new world wide audience while I think local attendance will go up as people want to re-join society.
- Hopefully as close to before as it can be.
- It will have to be a hybrid of in person and virtual.
- More active

Do you have children/teenagers that you would want to be involved in church ministries or activities?

19 responses



What kind of activities would you want for them?

- Children church
- Tween/ teen engagement that is inclusive and impactful. Maybe spiritual peer mentoring for those who aren't Baptized or not sure what faith looks like.
- Sunday school. Holiday events. Community events
- bible camps, kids church
- Small groups for kids aside from bible study/kids church.
- Coping and socializing as a teen
- Youth groups, specific interest groups such as gaming, science and social groups like scouting.
- Youth group, serving in ministry.
- Small groups, community service projects
- Kids Church and age appropriate activities where its fun and educational
- N/A
- Youth group, choir, Boy and Girl Scouts,
- Depends on what the options are.
- Children - children's church, special activities.... Teens - band, leadership, emotional well-being

APPENDIX D: QUESTIONNAIRE INTERVIEWS

**All interviews have been severely redacted for anonymity and relevance.*

Interview 1:

Horace Hough

Alright, so with that, let me start going through the questionnaire, I will read to you what you answered, because I don't presume that you remember at all. Okay. The first question, and this is--the first question, and it's simple--I'm not going to, I don't need an in-depth answer here. But I asked you to mark all statements that reflect your beliefs about what the Black church should be. The options that you chose, were: "a place to join in with other like-minded people to help the less fortunate"; "a place where people can worship in the Black church tradition without compromise"; "a place where Black people can feel like they are a part of a culturally relevant community"; "a place where the focus is holiness, righteousness and salvation through Jesus"; "a place where politics and its impact is addressed and discussed"; "a place that is openly active in social justice"; and "a place that serves as a community center providing as many needs and programs for the community as possible." The only one you did not check was: "a safe place for people to worship, learn, and be provided for and be encouraged". And I was just curious why that one, you didn't? Does--you know--you did not check: a safe place to worship learn and be provided for and be encouraged.

Interviewee 1

Yeah. I think it may have been the "provided for" line, you know, a push and pull because, I think, one of the ones that I did check, you said was, you know, to take care of people who are in need, but I don't think--you know, and I feel that way for that population, but I don't think generally speaking, that the church is a place of provision, being finances, or whatever the case may be. I don't think that folks should come to church looking specifically for that. But I do believe that if folks are at the church, or the church sees a need, whether it be in the walls or outside of the walls, the church should address that. But I don't think people need to come expecting to be given that, you know, it's--it is a place for spiritual means. And it's, and I think that was probably the reason I left it out, was that one portion, just that provision portion of things like what we mean by provisions.

Horace Hough

Sounds good. Thank you so much. The second question I'd like to follow up on is, which of the following best reflects how you understand the spiritual role of the pastor? The options were: coach, shepherd, teacher, theologian, father, other. You picked shepherd. And I just wanted you to expound on that.

Interviewee

I take the word literally, as leader. Biblically as leader/shepherd. And in whatever way you find that and that's purely the reason I chose that one.

Horace Hough

Sounds good. Thank you much. So the next question was: Are there ministries and activities that are a quote unquote "must have" for you to attend a church. And I asked if your answer is yes, please share what they may be. Your answers were: e-ministry, social action, community outreach. And as an example, you gave food banks, clothing drives, education, etc. I wanted you to expound more on e-ministry and what that means to you.

Interviewee

Yes, I will start by telling you that for time, I don't know if we technically still are--My spouse and I were e-ministry leads for our church because we moved. Well, yeah, we moved away from our home state. And we would still--we were close enough where most weekends we'd still go home and go to our church that we'd attended in (redacted). We were living about three hours away in a small town that didn't suit us. And at the same time, that church at home was falling short. In the social justice category. That's a long story for another day. And at that exact same time, we were introduced to or reintroduced to the church that we became e-members of. And that's (redacted). And so we saw him at Howard, we happened to be in DC, he was at Howard, saw him and he was hitting everything that we were missing, and that we had issue with at home. So we started watching online. And jokingly one Sunday, my spouse wrote in the comments, like "hey, your e-member is watching"--not knowing they actually did have an e-ministry. And so somebody said, "Hey, did you fill out the form in person? (audio drops)

Horace Hough

One second--I lost you--I'm sorry, and I think that's on me. But can you just go back to you said they asked, "Did you fill out the form?" And then take it from there?

Interviewee

Yep. Okay. So yeah, they asked (that we) fill out the form, which made us realize they actually did have space for e-members, they actually had e-ministry and remote members, so to speak. So we didn't know that. So we became e-members, and eventually came to visit the church a couple times, when we were in (redacted), visiting friends or family, and met some of the leadership. And we were asked to be leads of the e-ministry, which was odd not being on site. But nevertheless, when you talk about the demographic that you're addressing, you know, this age group, professionally speaking this group, it is a group that's mobile, or, you know, climbing the corporate ladder, so digitally moving hither and yon. And finding a church that feels good all the time, every time you go to a different place, is not easy, and even not even possible all the time. Because you're not always moving to big metropolitan cities. So I think it's important that people who want a spiritual connection to and in the fellowship, are able to have that where they want to

have it, and it should be easy and available. That's why that's important. Because it happened to us.

Horace Hough

So what would you say are the tenets or the tent poles of a viable ministry?

Interviewee

Learning the hard way, I think whoever is in charge of it does need to be on site, they should not be an e-member, because you still need to be connected to the vision and the leadership of the church, right, which we were not--which made it challenging. And definitely believe that it needs to serve those who are remote as much in the same way as you can serve ones who are present, you know, making sure that you have online service, that's one thing, but also, is there a specific chaplain or pastor that's assigned to that body that they can call on they can the same way you know, if you're in person, you can ask the pastor or your flock leader or cell leader or whatever, somebody to pray for you or come visit or do something--do they have a person that they can reach out to and deliver that. And I think COVID has taught us that maybe even communion is possible remotely. So facilitating those types of things. Understanding when the people are in town, making them welcome, inviting them in and understanding that yes, you're an e-member but when you're here and when you're in person, this is how we can fellowship as well and understand that a person is there maybe make a big deal about them being there. But offering support to them offering whatever it is that they may need spiritually in the same way that they're a part so that they're engaged. Still connected with the church and, and not just viewer only.

Horace Hough

Right.

Interviewee

So then that, you know, there, there's avenues for them to give of course financially, but even in other ways, you know, to serve. What can they do? Can they donate to the clothing drive? Can they donate to a food drive? Can they be present for a homecoming of sorts, you know, maybe like, make a summer rally or something people come. So I think that it's about engagement and activity, not just leaving them to be viewers...and asking them to text to give.

Interviewee

And by the way, it's not easy.

Horace Hough

So we are almost done, actually. You prefer a medium to larger church. So greater than 500 members. I just want to know why. I don't have a lean on this. Just curious.

Interviewee

Number one, I never have--yeah, I've never gone to a small church. And actually a different point in my life, I would have said (redacted) So at one point, I would have just said medium because I've only ever been a member of a church that had, you know, five, maybe 800 Max. But I've never been a member of a very small church like a church with 100 people or fewer, so it was my comfort level. And then I had biases against like mega churches or what may be considered a mega church in number. Some of those justified, some not. So that was my, always my comfort level until I joined a larger church. And really came to understand in myself that the church is what you make, you know, if you're involved it get smaller, like anything, and you get to know people, people get to know you, you feel more connected. But with the smaller church, I couldn't do it just because I feel like anywhere you go, work is gonna fall on the few. And if you have a smaller church, that's even fewer. And like, I don't need to be pointed out, I like, I like to be in the streets a little bit. So if I miss a Sunday, I don't need nobody calling me, (laughter) so I need the space to do what I want to do and also the resources, activities, etc, that come with a medium to larger church are important to me. And--but namely, I don't I need but I want a little bit of anonymity, but a little bit of getting in there and getting my hands dirty where I want to. If that makes sense. Yeah.

Horace Hough

Thank you for that. Alright, so these next three questions...I'm just asking you to expound on them. I would just like to hear you talk more about it. Okay, regarding online worship experiences, besides the sermon, what do you look for when attending a virtual service? You answered: ease of logging in; ease of giving; music/choir; professional/skilled videography; and quality sound. I understand, I believe all of that. Just curious about the "ease of logging in."

Interviewee

So you've seen websites where everything is on the landing page?

Horace Hough

Yep.

Interviewee

And you can't find what you're looking for, because everything is on the landing page. Um, and I think it just comes with savvy of understanding how technology works, and how user experience is, or should be. So making it easy to find it. Making it easy, a one click thing, or easy directions? Not: It's at the bottom or in the middle of just verbage. The whole program is on the front page. That's all.

Horace Hough

Thank you for that. Under the critique section, it says, As a Black professional, what are some issues to which the Black church needs to pay more attention? You answered:

"strengthening the Black family", "offering human services for the community"; "social/slash political issues". I wanted to ask you to expound on strengthening the Black family.

Interviewee

I think there's a lot of focus in church on singles, and then marriage, particularly how to be a good wife. Not so much even marriage, just how to be a wife. And but you don't see a lot that talks about the family as a whole. There's a pocket right? The youth ministry, the children's ministry, the men's, the women's, the couples and the singles. But I don't, and maybe because I don't have kids, maybe I miss it. But I don't see a lot of family managing the woes, ills, struggles, of family life. And I think that that would be important the same way we focus on marriage and say, you know, Hey, these are some hurdles you may come across, or hey, here's some tips and tricks and, and heads up on challenges of marriage and how you can avoid some of those hurdles, etc. I don't hear that same thing when we're talking about the whole family dynamic. And I think that matters and matters beyond just the marriage. And I think kids can learn from that too. Right? Not just their kid stuff and "children obey your parents". I mean, there's more to it.

Horace Hough

That's very insightful. What are some common issues that disappoint you, offend you, or both about the Black church? You answered: "Lack of community outreach and involvement", "focus on tithes and offerings without accountability" and transparency about the disbursement of funds", "self-serving financially and in acts of service"? The last part of that answer, that says self-serving financially, and in acts of service, I just wanted some clarity on what that means.

Interviewee

Yeah. So I feel like this about a few different things. But since we're talking about church, we talk about church. So we've got funds, we have resources, and then we have activities for ourselves, but and not particularly my church, my church is doing a really good job of reaching out. However, historically, I've seen that we've got fantastic banquets and concerts and events and retreats and things like that. But that's just for us. You know, what about outside of the walls? What about bringing other people in or trying to evangelize, get folks inside, feed people, clothe people, house people, meet their needs, help them get connected for community services? What about that? And how can we put our energy, effort, and resources financial or otherwise--talent and treasure, right? Put all of that out and not just in and having parties and then just tap you know, patting ourselves on the back? Yes, we need to you know, celebrate anniversaries and, and have a good time and teach ourselves and pour into ourselves. Yes, we need to do that. But when you look at your balance sheet at the end of every year, how much went out versus how much stayed in? That's something that's frustrating. Or your administrative costs, you know, have been through the roof because you've got a facility and a staff that's eating up all your costs. But then what? Right, what else is happening?

Horace Hough

I asked if there were any church community activities that are of interest to you. You answered "Bible study and revivals" and Bible study and revivals. And although I think I understand the Bible study, and obviously all the various iterations of Bible studies that exist in the world, to accommodate people in their different socio economic and cultural stages of life. Revivals are not something I hear often as a "aw, man I wish" or not, I wish but "man I would be really interested in what a revival offers!" But that was a long way for me to kind of come around to say, what does--for whatever you envision revivals to be, in a way that is something that you would be interested in--What do revivals in that form offer you? What does it do to fulfill you?

Interviewee

Yeah, it's almost a rededication of sorts, recommitment and going, you know, why, why did you come here? And the revivals are, when you go back even to the old tradition, let alone some new, it's always, you know, more fiery than typically, your Sunday service. And more exciting, especially when you go to or have gone to a church that's a little less charismatic, the revivals tend to be a little more lively, and possibly even attractive to somebody who wouldn't typically come or somebody who may have straight away. And I'm surprised that I wrote that, (laughter) but in reflecting since I did write it, the easier question is, what do I think about revivals? That's what I think I'm answering really. Yeah, I think it's just the recommitment, rededication kind of really understanding or going back to your, those early feelings of why you got saved and why you came to the church and all of that.

Interview 2:

Interviewee 2

It would have been great to have had a fellowship of other professionals to talk about how should we be showing up so we can balance, the authenticity of what we're dealing with, through the lens of our spirituality, right? But also, being able to do it in a way where we shouldn't step back in the organization, and kowtow to what they tell us. We should step into, what is the right thing to do? Now he's talking about whole different dimension, because we got to make money, right? We are talking about people who have jobs, that they're trying to imbalance the ambitions against...if you don't talk to me, right? If there's no forum for us to get together, we ain't really trading notes about the micro aggressions? And how do we like for real people to be who they really need to be, but through the lens of my godness? Because greed is always around a corner. Materialism is always around the corner. And I'm listening to these fools with this prosperity gospel, I now have bad theology that is providing me with an excuse, to where I'm going to be greedy. That ain't Jesus dog, I'm supposed to be saying like, yeah, y'all can tax to me a little bit more. I don't like to write the checkbook but tax me some more so these kids can go to school, and and get a quality education. But oh, by the way, in exchange for you taxing me more for these kids to have quality education, then I also need to get my rump up and go down to the school board meeting. And let my voice be heard as a member of the community and oh, by the way, I represent this church community. Therefore, y'all ain't going mishandle our babies, like these are the things that we have to be able to speak to to say, Yo to whom much is given, much is required. Heavy is the head that wears the crown. If y'all believe that y'all have been gifted in grace in these ways, I also need you to go tackle some stuff differently. We can keep feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, but also needs you to go and be in some boardrooms. I need you to go and be impacted how we develop policy. Like these are some missing pieces. That frankly, if we don't get after it, the church remains on the sideline.

Interview 3:

Horace Hough

One of the questions I asked under critique was as a Black professional, what are some issues to which the Black church needs to pay more attention? Your answer was more Black history, there could be an opportunity to address the lack of education, as it pertains to Black history that many school systems have when it comes to teaching the contributions and stories of survival and perseverance of the Black community.

(redacted) I would like you just to elaborate more on using Black history in the context that you think the church needs to pay more attention to it.

Interviewee 3

I should probably preface this by saying that I'm not coming from a place in which I feel as if the Black church doesn't address it. I was just making a statement to reaffirm that, if, if it's doing it, good, if it's not, and by incorporating more, and then if you aren't like back to saying, if you were doing it, continue to do that, make sure, like make that a principle of education because as I said it, it isn't being taught. (redacted) It's the nuances and how the history has manifested itself into what the world looks like today in the way that we view ourselves and the way that we carry ourselves our confidence, whether you know, based on your economic position or otherwise is right. Having an understanding of history, always, I think is a is a missing component to intellectual capacity and comprehension. Because it's, it's easy to give someone a sort of concept, and then they can either choose to believe you because they trust the person that's delivering the message. Or they can hear the message from the messenger, but then have an understanding and to be able to place different things and say, Oh, I, I make sense, because on this day, and this year, you know, these things happened. And so it may give some, some folks a vision into why they're feeling a certain way, or why they should be proud of who they are, where they come from, which I think is, is helpful. Because we're living in a world now, in which a lot of people misinterpret what independence or self-made tends to look like. And it's important that people understand that collaboration has always been a key principle to any success. And what the Black community has done always, and obviously, utilizing the Black church as this as a unifying vessel, to bring people together is important to highlight what came out of that. So you go to home base around the basic, you smile, pitch the ball, you hit it, you trot around the basis, and you always end up back home, waiting for your next your chance to get back up to the plate again, and swing and try something a new venture, in order to continue to swing at the same venture if you missed it the first time. And so that, I think that's really important, especially today, because it isn't really taught a lot of the stuff that our contributions hasn't been taught. And so it's just a big part of self-esteem. And just feeling good about yourself is aiming just where people are today. I was having a conversation with a friend of mine, and she was she was saying, you know, I'm not where I should be, or I'm not as far as where I envision myself being at this age. And so we always have to remind ourselves that we don't have the benefit of generational pass downs of passing down of

assets. And so when you say you're not as far as you think you should be, you're actually probably a lot further than you probably should be, given where we start out from. And so it's important that people really understand that even if you aren't as far as where you think you are, or you're where you think you should be based on the investments you've made in yourself, be it via school or business and is quote unquote, doing the right thing, right. It's important to understand that the legacy that you come from, isn't one that necessarily gave you a launch pad. So you can't compare yourself to kids you went to school with if you're more of a, let's call it demographically diverse, ethnic, diverse community, because these kids have a launch pad that is a lot different than your launch pad. So when you see yourself in class with them, and you're realizing that nobody in this class is smarter than me, why is it that they're excelling at it? It seems as if they're excelling at a more rapid pace than me, when I know I have as much, if not more, to give than them. That sort of goes against the whole meritocracy of it all right? Where they say well the cream rises to the top, the talent rises to the top,(redacted) and then you have to realize that that's not the case. (redacted) Cream does rise to the top sodas is other stuff, you know, your bowels, also rise to the top. You know, so So you can't necessarily take that at face value. It's important to have perspective about where you are, where you come from, and how that should be celebrated.

Horace Hough

(Redacted) If I would ask you that question, again, about issues which the Black church should pay more attention. As a *Black professional*, what would you? How would you answer that question? In the context of something that you think could serve you, or your demographic?

Interviewee 3

Yeah. It's not to say there isn't anything. I'm trying to figure out in what capacity an institution could actually support? Right. (redacted) I don't necessarily know that anything different needs to be done from the church's perspective. It probably varies from institution to institution. But collaboration is key for me, like it's, I'm a big proponent of collaboration, right, and connecting the dots. And so, as you mentioned, with, there are some professionals who, who may have, you know, seem as if they're sort of doing well, but they're stressed because they're living check to check just like anyone else making six figures. But the reality is, you know, their disposable income, maybe something like \$10,000. I mean, so. Going back to just me just kind of keeping it simple, is just continuing to, to drive home the message of collaboration, unity and community. Right. Because a challenge that I know, I personally have had, and I've been growing into, is being more transparent about things that I'm working on. And just sharing what I'm doing with people. Because there's, there's opportunities for other people to help you and to solve problems that you didn't think would come from those people, because they have access to a resource that you didn't even know, or even thought of them as even having access to. And so just say, continue to be a place a safe place for people to be in maybe encouraging more transparency with people, other people, other congregation members

about what challenges folks are having. And even have to be challenges, really, it can just be just sharing, like, you know, I'm trying to get through this thing. And, you know, I don't know how I'm gonna sort of do it, but you know, it may ring a bell for somebody else. That's kind of like the only thing I could really think of in terms of a capacity, I can't really think of anything, where the church would actually be more than more than more than the traditional convener that that is already always acted as. But it may, it may take more encouraging, of that type of transparency and an openness with congregants who may not necessarily think that's the time or the place to sort of like that.

Horace Hough

So thank you for that. One of the things I asked was, which of the following best reflects how you understand the spiritual role of a pastor, the options were coach, Shepherd, teacher, theologian, Father, other. You selected theologian, and I just want to know, what does that mean to you?

Interviewee 3

So I think, to me, it just means we're looking to someone who is has put in the work that can dissect everything that we're hearing, that we're feeling, from that from that spiritual perspective, right. It's about credibility, in that respect. So to a lay person that's coming in, they may hear one word or phrase or scripture...they're going to need to be able to identify someone that's credible that they will believe in that they can trust to either break it down, or have it make sense for them in a way that they can digest it. And that's going to be different for different people, that's going to be different ways for different people. And so that that was sort of my way of thinking about that.

Horace Hough

Thank you for that. So, I have two other questions that are not on the sheet. I am looking to, as you already know, attract develop relationships and involves Black American professionals. Do you have any suggested reading online resources, or anything else that you think might help me or benefit me as a pastor, trying to attract develop relationship and evolve that demographic? I'm not looking to manipulate the relationship just to bring them in, my care is also to minister to them, right? So it's like, so in that context, any reading, just to kind of give you a seed there.

Interviewee 3

Oh, man. Um, I mean, I'll tell you like the book that I'm reading now, is just, it's called the Black Tax, basically, and Shawn Rochester. Yeah, I've been struggling to get through that thing. Not as if it not because the reading is tough, but because just thinking about it. It's hard to get through because it's real. It's real pain that I can sort of identify and I can identify it with my family tree. Yeah, I can, I can kind of trace back to where my family was working (redacted). And you start to think about it. So it's been a tough for me to even get through, but it's important reading. I've talked to my father about it. And my family's from (redacted). Some of the pieces that he hits as it pertains to schools and not

having, like, children just not having school. Like, it resonated. My father is just telling me he's like, you know, there wasn't even a school that Black kids could go to beyond sort of, like seventh grade in (redacted), they had to live with some family up in (redacted), if they wanted to go to any, like a high school. (redacted) And it becomes really, it becomes really hard to if you have that type of connection with your history, which is part of the reason why I was saying like, it's really important that people understand history. Because you can make sense of the world a little bit more. I mean, you do have to watch your mental, a little bit because it can be it can be depressing if you if you really kind of immerse yourself in it, and you don't have some support to sort of make sure that you don't stay in that place.

Interviewee 3

Yeah, and that's why I think, you know, for me, that's why I think the opportunity for the Black church is to make sure...like that, to me is almost like mission critical. To make sure that people know about this stuff, so they can identify it. And then obviously be that trusted convener that recognizes the importance, but also is being uplifting, in the way that the Black church has always been. And just melding the two by saying like, you know, we're identifying resources, if we have to be that resource we will be, because that's what we've always been. That's, what we've always been. So that's where I kind of see the opportunity to just keep on doing, driving forward, being what Black Church has always been to that extent, and just being a trusted resource. Especially now. I mean, he said it, I mean, it's only mediums for information, you really have to sort of be careful about where you're getting your information from.

Horace Hough

Final question. So quick, yes, or no? In terms of your mentality as a professional, would you be willing to participate as a regular participant, like we're in a church or a program, out of your geographic location. So (redacted) if a church in (redacted) wanted you to volunteer your time over six weeks to just talk with our members, is that something that you would it be willing to do? And to completely frame it...or would you prefer to work physically face to face with an organization?

Interviewee 3

I try to contribute in ways that's, that's most beneficial for both parties. So, if there was something in (redacted), where folks felt that my voice could be helpful, and the only way that I could do that was via Zoom, then I'd sort of throw it back to other folks and say, is the best use of your time to sort of, to to engage with me via Zoom...or would you rather have somebody in person. And then we'd have to sort of work that out. But I say that to say, I'd be open to it, if folks that thought that I could provide value to the conversation. My whole thing is making sure that I can add quality value to the conversation, to any conversation, to any event, be it local, or somewhere else. Just really wanting to be transparent and open about the value of the time, because one thing I am pretty sensitive about is other people's time. And so I want to make sure that if I'm

participating, I want to make sure that they're getting what they need from me. But I also want to make sure that they have this together, where I'm making sure that they're in a position to receive what I'm offering as well.

Interview 4:

Horace Hough

You filled out your questionnaire, but I did just have some basic questions for you. Before we really get into it, are you currently a member of a church.

Interviewee 4

I am not currently a member of a church.

Horace Hough

(redacted) Number one, the first question was actually about is asked which of the following best expresses your personal feelings about the Black church? One option was the Black church should primarily focus on relating to the Black community. And the next option was the Black church are primarily focused on relating to and attracting people from other cultures, you picked, focus on relating to the Black community? And I just wanted to know if you could expound on that. What does that mean to you?

Interviewee 4

Yeah, so I think for me, it's more of like a historical feeling of like, this is where we have an opportunity to kind of build relationships, get to know people that have similar experiences that we have, but also have a place around people who look like us and, you know, are attracted to similar things. And I say that because, you know, I went to school in the south, and the church was just kind of like, what attracted me so much to like, being in college. Like, I would go to church, and I would see people that look like me. Here too, but like, it's just different. It's not the same kind of feel. And I feel like when you're new to an area, or when you're doing something new, the first thing that I'm looking to do is like to join the church and like to, you know, build that relationship, because that's how you network and you know, that's one way of kind of getting to know the community in which you're living in. So for me, it's something that's important to me.

Horace Hough

Awesome. Thank you so much. Appreciate it. The next question was, do you believe that the church should work with other non-Christian communities of faith to deal with social issues and concerns? You said "no" because it really depended on what the issues and concerns are... without you knowing what the specific issues could be. In what cases would it be all right, in your mind? In what cases would it be okay to work with non-Christian communities of faith, to deal with issues and concerns? And when would it not be?

Interviewee 4

I think things like, like a school shooting, or like, I'm trying to think of, like some things that happened...like, something that I think most people would kind of just come together to kind of all kind of work towards the same cause. (redacted) If there was some kind of

rally around, pro-weapons or, you know, whatever, stuff like that, that I think is kind of against what believers kind of feel, I feel like that would be kind of hard to partner with others who may have different varying views on a particular topic.

Horace Hough

Which of the following best reflects how you understand the spiritual role of a pastor? The options will coach Shepherd, teacher, theologian, Father, other. And you picked teacher? Just wanted to know, what does that mean to you?

Interviewee 4

For me, it's someone that I can learn from and someone that can kind of, we can work together, hand in hand, not necessarily knowing all the answers, but being able to provide guidance and some knowledge around something that can be helpful. You know, more of a guide and like, someone that walks with you, not necessarily having all the answers. I don't think that that's your role is to provide all the answers. I think you're there to kind of help guide.

Horace Hough

On the pastor note, I asked do you prefer the pastor to have professional work experience outside of ministry? And you said yes. I just want to know, why is that?

Interviewee 4

I feel like it just allows for people to have like another option. It was more so like, if you do or if you don't, I wasn't hard fast on one or the other. But I like the option for pastors who do kind of do both. Like I think that's interesting and really kind of amazing, because I know it's really hard to kind of run a church, so you're able to do both like, it's great. Most of the pastors that I've and the churches that I've been a part of, we're not that they did not have more than one job.

Horace Hough

I asked the question, are there ministries and activities that are a must have for you to attend church? If your answer is yes, please share what they may be. And you said, yes, I would like opportunities for small groups, either by age or gender. And I just wanted to expound on what you mean by age, or gender?

Interviewee 4

Yeah, so, uh, from my experience, I have been in situations where it's like, oh, we're gonna put all the youth together, right. And like, as you got older, they still tried to hold that cap of the youth. So, you know, like, I would be in a group in my 20s with, like, first graders. It was like everybody, you know. (redacted) There's just different experiences that happen. So for me, I would want to be around the same age peers, or a little bit older. Similar in age. And then in terms of gender, I have participated in...I just did a women's book study. And it's just nice to be able to have conversations with same gender, but I

also appreciate like, when I was in college, I did mixed gender, like Bible groups. It was really great to just be able to get those varying perspective. So yeah, I mean, I same gender is good. I would participate in coed. I would also appreciate someone or my same age group.

Horace Hough

Regarding online worship experiences, besides the sermon, what do you look for when attending a virtual service? You say, praise and worship, and announcements. I understand the praise and worship. The announcements part I wanted to ask you a little more about, if you could elaborate on I mean,

Interviewee 4

I attend virtual ones. So sometimes you just you log in, and it's like, maybe you're getting a presentation, or maybe you're getting the actual sermon itself. But like you forget that there's an actual church that's happening that's doing work outside of the church. So, maybe it's an opportunity to hear like, what else is happening? What else? Can I be a part of? What you know, what, what's going on, outside of, you know, the normal things that you would kind of look for in a service. So I love the announcement, because that's how I know how I can be a part, or what's happening around me that I may not know.

Horace Hough

That's awesome. Thank you for that. As a Black professional, what are some issues to which the Black church needs to pay more attention? And you said what is happening in the community and schools. And you mentioned mental health. And I wanted to know if there's anything you wanted to add to, or anything you want to elaborate on, in the context of mental health.

I think for me, it's really just understanding or bringing awareness, especially in the Black community, because it's not really talked about often. So just bring awareness to like, here are some things that that we could do, or some resources that are available to us that you may not be aware of. Whether or not people choose to go that way...like talking about it, understanding what's available in the community, maybe bringing those people in, just helps. Because I feel like our population doesn't really...there's a stigma for some - not for everyone - but for some, and, you know, so many people experience or have some mental health illness or at least know, someone who does, and it could be from a child all the way up to, you know, an elder. So, not talking about it... like I feel like we like normalize that. Like we need to be able to talk about these things, because people are experiencing things that, maybe their next door neighbor, and maybe the person sitting next to them in church, is also experiencing. And so it just provides an opportunity to kind of build awareness, and really understand what's available to people and how to access it. And I feel like the church is a good way to kind of do that, because most people

have relationships in the church. And so being able to understand what else is available and seeing that connection between the two, I think is helpful.

The next follow up to that was what are some common issues that disappoint you offend you? Or both? About the Black church? And I'm actually going to ask you these in sections. So you said, lack of engaging sermons, length of service, expectations to participate, and time management. Okay. All for those, I want to ask you to expound on a little bit, starting with the lack of engaging sermon. So when you describe engaging, and I know you're speaking only from your perspective, yeah. What is or is not engaging, what fits into that category.

Horace Hough

Absolutely. Okay, that's good. length of service. Please, elaborate on that.

Interviewee 4

For me, like an "engaged in sermon" is like something that I, and I guess maybe this comes with age, being able to understand what's being said to me, and like, immediately, just being like, that's a confirmation. I see where that's going. You know, like, just being able to, like affirm what's being said. But also the, the pastor, whoever is delivering is also moving and not just staying in one place or monotone. Or, you know, gets the crowd kind of going, uses the audience, pays attention to what they're seeing...I think is important, too, isn't just reading isn't just staying in one place isn't repeating the same things over and over and over again. When I was younger, I was like, none of this relates to me, but like, now it's like, yeah, it all does. But I think that's the other part too, is understanding what can be relatable. And understanding who your audiences is important too.

Interviewee 4

I think just being mindful that like...especially if it's not engaging, or if it's repetitive... like I think an hour to an hour and a half service is appropriate length of time.

Horace Hough

Do you know why you like the eight o'clock instead of, let's say, an 11 or an afternoon?

Interviewee 4

Yeah, I just I feel like for me, it it allows me to be able to, to do other things, honestly,

Horace Hough

You also have expectations to participate.

Interviewee 4

Yeah, especially for my age group, it's like, (redacted) if I volunteer one time, then it's like, I want to hold on to this person, I want them to volunteer all the time. I feel bad and I want to help, but I just feel like there's not an understanding of like, give them (people) options, let them choose. Yes, you can reach out to them and remind them, but I think that, that level of expectation of like, you should be doing this, or, you know, you came this one time, like, why aren't you coming back another time? You know, those types of things, can turn people off a little bit. Once you build relationships, it's a little bit easier for people to just want to participate naturally, but if they're feeling like it's an expectation, then that it's, that's where it gets tricky.

Horace Hough

Time management. Is that in correlation to length of service? Or is that different?

No, I think that's starting, like, at the time that you're gonna say you're gonna start. Like, if there's going to be like a cookout or an event, having things ready to go, like, people's time is important.

Horace Hough

If there was one thing that you could change about the Black church to make it more attractive to you, what would it be? You gave me a bunch of options, but one of them was guest speakers outside of leadership, and then in parentheses, you put financial.

Interviewee 4

To go back to the whole mental health thing, I think providing like, other people in the community that provides services is important. And we want to make sure that people in the church, or whoever's affiliated with the church, is building their capacity too. And We understand that, through groups or through conversations, people are really struggling with finances, or people are really struggling with mental health or whatever social/emotional. Bring in an expert to kind of help people move through that. You can still connect it to, you know, church, and all those things. But I think sometimes you got to get the experts in to kind of really help people where they are. And I think, again, using church as a place to do that...the relationships are already there and just helps, then you can pull in accountability. Like, if I was in a group and I was like, Oh, I'm really struggling with this, and we attended something, we can hold each other accountable for that.

Horace Hough

I have these two follow ups. f you were to serve or work in a church in any capacity, would you prefer to participate using your professional skills, or would you prefer to participate using talents and hobbies and things that you aren't usually able to utilize? Or both?

Interviewee 4

Can I pick both? Or is it okay? So I would probably do both. So I mean, right now like, obviously, I'm an (redacted), so that's one area but then I also just enjoy like, reading and like stuff like that. I guess you can still kind of partner in that way, but it's not something that I get to do on a regular basis outside of like my work (redacted). I would definitely do both if I could. Because if I can, I want to be able to do it in my free time.

Horace Hough

All right, so final one. And I'm not asking you for First Baptist, just more of a consideration in general, would you be willing to participate in a another church's activities in another state or location, virtually. And what I mean by participate is to actually be an active person. So you're talking about potentially doing workshops being part of a book club being part of Bible studies? Or would you want to reserve that for kind of your locale in the community that you physically know?

Interviewee 4

Yeah, so this is interesting, um, because I was actually just talking to my sister about this, like the other day. Um, I guess it...maybe it depends. I feel like a book study I could do virtually. I did a virtual one. And it was fine. Um, but to your first question of like, the importance of the Black church and reaching out to a Black community, I want to be able to build relationships within the place that I live. And so, I feel like those types of events and groups provide that opportunity for me to do it locally. But I also appreciate different perspectives and getting to know people in other places as well. So like, I could do both, but I think the local feel is important.

Interview 5:

Horace Hough

Toward the end of the questionnaire, I started asking about just preferences and critique. Right. And my one of my questions was regarding online worship experiences, besides the sermon, what do you look for when attending a virtual service? And I gave possible options of choir scripture, etc. Your answer was sermon is primary. And I don't know that scripture outside of the sermon is necessary. I also like inspirational and emotional choir selections. And although I believe I know what you mean, by you don't know that scripture outside of the sermon is necessary, that you prefer full context, I just wanted you to elaborate on that.

Interviewee 5

So what I mean by that is what I appreciate with a sermon is that it's, it's based in Scripture, right? So there's a scripture that the overall lesson is at the outset referencing and what is the context of the overall sermon. So I do appreciate that the sermon is in context of a particular scripture reference. I am familiar with the fact that sometimes, there are scriptures that are put up on the screen, that are mentioned at different parts of the overall service, not necessarily contact with the sermon. And while I think that that's sometimes nice, I really do prefer that there's a more thorough conversation about the Scripture reference to reference itself. And I say that because there have been times when I have definitely heard a particular reference, whether it's the wording itself, or, you know, some random person's explanation, whatever have you. And I feel like the discussion has been out of context of what particular phrase in the Bible was. And so, for me, I'm not someone who's ever sat down and read the bible cover to cover I'm sure most aren't, but I do think it's a good thing to do. Because I think in addition to your spiritual connectivity, it really gives you historical context about a lot of things. So I have people who have done that. But that's also the reason why when I'm looking for a church service and a sermon, I'm looking for someone to educate me more about the Bible than I really have educated myself. So a scriptural reference by itself doesn't really move me as much as a sort of sermon and discussion about the reference

Horace Hough

One of the answers you gave under critique has a few subsections. So we'll walk through those one by one. as a black professional, what are some issues to which the black church needs to pay more attention? Your answers were work life balance, source, full networking, in parentheses, you put understanding how to make connections that are mutually beneficial to the members and efficiently support church work. And you put financial empowerment opportunities. I would like you if you could to elaborate on each one of those separately. So the first one issue you said was work life balance? And that's something that the church should pay more attention to? Can you talk a little bit more about what that means for you? And how you would look at it?

Interviewee 5

Sometimes the needs of working professionals, because people aren't anticipating things like financial needs, or, or housing or food services, some of the more emotional and really navigating life needs are lost, you know, from the context of the church. I think that's also why I appreciate the Scripture discussions, because that usually is what really helps me to put things into perspective about life, focus on the right things, and not on the wrong things. And so I think that when you're dealing with professionals, particularly black professionals, because I think that we tend to carry a heavier weight - not that I'm trying to speak for all black people...or all white people - but I think, you know, black professionals, given some of the social pressures that we feel in that environment, not being around many of us in the work that we do, the work life balance becomes really something that's a big strain on us, and that we could use more spiritual guidance in. For example, on top of dealing with (redacted) you know, you're also dealing at work with not just the pressure of the work, but the pressure of people, sometimes probably questioning your qualifications simply because you're Black. Treating you different, because you're Black, you don't always have an outlet to pursue those things. I mean, professional organizations, that center around people of color have been very beneficial to me, because I feel like I'm in a room with like-minded people who have shared experiences that we can talk about. And so I think when it comes to spiritual guidance for black professionals, being able to contextualize all of that, balancing out not just your time, but your emotional energy. I think one of the things that I have learned more so in my current role than ever before, is that I carry a heavier weight when I'm experiencing things at work when I think most of my colleagues do. So I get emotionally drained and emotionally stressed more than some of my colleagues over like the same exact matter, right. And I think some of that just comes from feeling like I'm constantly being judged or questioned, or you know, looked at in a different way than the rest of them. And being able to remind myself that they're not the judge. I would definitely say the one of my personal - and I don't know that that's for all black professionals - but I would say that one of my personal biggest struggles is that I have to remind myself that there's only so much weight you can give other people's opinions of you. And I think it's very natural for a professional to care to some degree because that's how you survive in professions right? I mean, your reputation and what people think about your work becomes very critical, but how much you give that weight in the grand scheme of life is a different story. And being able to trust that you are doing the best you can do for the right people, and more so than anything else regarding your family, I think is something that is a message that is easily forgotten for Black professionals because you're so focused on trying to do better. (redacted) So, I think that no matter who you are, what your current situation is, it's still a balance, I think, because we spend so much energy trying to either prove ourselves at work or do our work the best way that we can, it's easy for black professionals to get more caught up in and more affected by what's going on at work, without remembering that what's really important is outside of work. What I always like to tell people is that I am the kind of person who I work to live, I don't live to work. You know, and even if you

feel that way, sometimes you're not living that way. And I know that I often need that reminder.

Horace Hough

You also mentioned resourceful networking. And you said its specifically understanding how to make connections that are mutually beneficial to the members and efficiently support church work. So I'd also like you to elaborate on that.

Interviewee 5

So resourceful networking...for people who are constantly in the room with other (redacted), sometimes that can be helpful, because (redacted) can serve as other references for you, you know, and, again, it's good for your reputation. It can also help you get more business. I can't necessarily speak for others (professions) in the same way. But the reality is networking outside of your profession, would be a lot more helpful. And so when we talk about Black professionals as one big umbrella, it's really nice to have professionals meet other professionals that aren't in their exact same profession so that you really expand your network. And that you really get to leverage that. I think that, especially given the life, the work life balance issues that we talked about, I think you do have people who really do want to dedicate their time to the work of the church, but don't always know the best way to do it. And it's embarrassing to say, because I don't think it's ever a good excuse to say, I don't have time to participate in church activities, because you should be prioritizing Church activity, which is the reality. I just think if there's a way to, and I'm not going to pretend to have the answers to some of my suggestions, I'm just sort of speaking from thought, you know, but if there's a way to engage members of the church, or even people that you want to be members of the church, but aren't yet, to be able to network with other professionals, not necessarily the same professional or sometimes in the same profession, but in a cohesive way where you're actually doing church services, right. So for example, it could be it could be that the church decides we want to offer financial literacy. And I know that I've talked about that in a different context, but they're different levels of financial literacy. Right, right. People need help balancing a checking account or balancing a checkbook, and some people need help with how do I invest my money, so that I'm maximizing my return. And, um, how do I save my money or put it in the right places so that I get the best tax benefits from it. There's different levels to financial literacy. Right. So it absolutely could be that, you could have a group of professionals that are working together to help some people who have a different level of need for financial literacy. You know, where they're working together on something that they're very good at to help other people within the church. But it also gives them the opportunity to work together, right? So if I'm working with a tax consultant, or an accountant, or an investment banker or something like that, you know, to talk about different types of financial literacy services for someone who's trying to balance their checkbook or even just do general savings, or trying to figure out their household bills, and how do they do that, then we're working together to support others. But that's also creating a network in which I'm working with other people that might be

able to help me with what my financial needs are (redacted). I know that was kind of a long answer. I hope that made sense.

Horace Hough

You've already covered the Financial Empowerment opportunities. Are you currently a member of a church or attending church?

Interviewee 5

On the books I'm probably still a member of (redacted), but no, I would not say that I'm an active member of a church. So I was I was baptized and joined (redacted). I moved. I live in (redacted), and eventually that, well before the pandemic, it was not as practical given the fact that I live in (redacted). So I don't know if you're familiar with (pastor), So I've known his wife for some time, and she's a very good friend of mine. And by extension, (redacted) has become a friend of mine as well. So when I was going to church in person, which I would not say was regular, I would usually go to (pastor's church). It's also very convenient. But since the pandemic, quite honestly, when I tune into church remotely, it's usually (redacted).

Horace Hough

I asked the question of do you believe that the church should work with other non-Christian communities of faith to do social issues and concerns? And you gave me a very in-depth answer, which we don't have time to go through.

Interviewee 5

I remember it, though, if you want me to speak briefly on it. Well, just as a starting point, I do want you to know that I remember being told that that survey wouldn't take long to figure out and to fill out and as I was filling it out, I was like no, these are not simple answers. It actually was a good exercise for me because it got me really thinking about my involvement with the church and why it hasn't been as involved as I actually would like it to be. But you know, I think one of the most interesting statements that I've, I've heard from other people when it comes to religion and spiritual spiritualities is when people say, I'm spiritual, I'm not religious. I'm spiritual, but I'm not religious. Right. And I think that's because you have a lot of people - and I would venture to guess that it relates, or it connects or overlaps, I guess, is a better word, with professional populations overall, I wouldn't necessarily say Black, white or whatever, but professional populations overall - but I think, you know, there are a lot of people who believe in God, right? They believe in God, they are spiritual people. But for any number of reasons, have reservations with religious institutions, no matter what combination, it is, right? Obviously, you hear things about the Catholic church all the time, you know, that aren't necessarily positive. People make jokes about the Black church, and the amount of time it is, you know, when you're in service, you know. I mean, there's, there's a whole bunch of things where people, you know, might say, I'm spiritual, but I'm not necessarily religious, and I don't necessarily want to align with a certain denomination, or things like that. I

think that what makes sense at the end of the day, is that sometimes, unfortunately, especially in some communities, you know, different religious whatever your particular religious focuses can separate you divide you from others. And I often feel like that should be like the exact opposite effect, right. So I always think it makes sense that, you know, as long as there's some sort of alignment, and you're not going to align on everything, that's why there are different ways to worship, you know. So you're not going to, you know, align on everything. But to the extent that there are things that you can align on, I really think it's better for the overall community, not just for how the entire community is serviced, but for the rapport and the cohesiveness of members that may be involved in different religious practices, to work together on things that they're aligned on. Because I think it shows a religious unity, it shows a spiritual unity, it shows that no matter how we may differ from in certain ways, what brings us together is a common spiritual belief that obviously, you know, some people don't have. So, I'm not one of those that thinks that everything should always be your church and your church only. Or even only Baptist, not Methodist. Or, you know, well, different with the, with Jewish people, or it's different. I think it's really important that to the extent that there is alignment, that there is that cohesiveness, particularly in a local community. Because if at the end of the day, everyone has a strong feeling that you want to be a strong positive presence for the community, the best way to do that is to maximize your resources. Right, you know, you can attract this group, you can attract this group, you can attract this group, we all have the common goal of wanting people to vote. So, let's get out and work together to make sure our entire community is voting, you know. We all have the common goal of wanting to make sure people get vaccinated. So let's get out together and make sure. So I think it's one of those things where I would actually encourage working with other religious groups for common goals, because I just think it's better for the community when that happens, than when groups are operating very separately.

Horace Hough

Thank you so much for that. Would you be willing, not necessarily for me but just in general, would you be willing to participate with another church in a ministry context, workshops, leading thing sessions? Would you be willing to participate with another church virtually, that you could not get to physically? Or would you prefer if you had if you could to just stay where, you know, you can physically participate?

Interviewee 5

I would be fine with virtual participation. I think, you know, there is something to say for physically being in church right? You know, virtual is just not the same as physically being in the house, right. But I think that, especially if you feel like you're not giving as much to the overall service to God that you'd like to feel like you're giving on a regular basis, whatever form that comes in, is what it comes in. If there's actually some way that I can benefit people in (redacted), I would be happy to benefit people in (redacted). I, at some point really do want to be more actively involved in a church that I consider a home church, you know. And I keep finding reasons and excuses why I haven't gotten there yet.

But I definitely hope to get there. But I don't think even when you're at that point that that should prevent you from being able to offer services at another church. I mean, just like pastors guest pastor at another church, you go to a different church one Sunday and give a guest lecture. To the extent that you are supportive of any organization or any church anywhere, I don't see why you wouldn't offer those services.

Horace Hough

Would you rather serve? Would you rather participate in a church using the skills that you have developed professionally? Or using talents and hobbies?

Interviewee 5

I think it would have to be both. I mean, I you know. Honestly...actually, it might be talents and hobbies. And I only say that, which is weird, because I like the professional networking piece of it. That would be a great asset. But the reality is, I'm very much the kind of person that when I'm off work, I like to be off work, you know. I sometimes hate when I need to try to use my work skills in a personal capacity. But at the same time, I do feel an obligation. I am someone that feels obligated. Like, if you have a certain skill set, then you are obligated to not just do that for the people that pay you but for the people who are your family rather than your church. You know what I mean? So, so I mean, if I would say both, I think both is a better answer.

Interview 6:

**The Site Team Representative and interviewee have a history of friendship.*

Horace Hough

So let me officially start the interview accordingly. I just wanted to ask you to elaborate on...I asked which of the following best reflects who you believe the church should serve. The first option was a church should primarily focus on providing for its members. The second option was a church should primarily focus on providing for people who are not members of the church. You picked: provide people who are not members. And I just wanted you to elaborate on that. So Why--and the question was closest resembles what you believe. So if you could just specify what your deeper thoughts are on that.

Interviewee

So, I've had experience with both. Being in (redacted), the church, you know, and growing up in Baptist Church, the Church focused on providing for their members, their community, you know, things like that. The church where I am right now had a different spin on that, in, in making our mission, a calling to change lives. So staying in alignment with what Jesus was teaching. He didn't--He came for the lost. So you know, our church is geared toward that, in how--how we welcome people, how we invite people, how we carry ourselves as members, with the understanding that the goal is to lead people to Christ. So we are called to behave a certain way, so as not to deter people, because that's what we see a lot. A lot of people stay away from partnering with a local church, because of church hurt, or you know, a church that shunned them. And it's like, well, if you can't, you know, as an unsaved person, if you can't find love in the walls of the church, you know, I can't expect you to find it anywhere else. So, you know, not the kind of love that that God is calling us to have or the love that he wants us to experience in our relationship with Him. So, yeah, you know, we're gonna serve the members that--that's by default, but the focus, I think, should be on, you know, catering to those who are unsaved.

Horace Hough

Awesome. Thank you so much. Okay--so you're (redacted), and you are I believe you said you are a member of a church there. What is the denomination of the church?

Interviewee

So the church is considered nondenominational. Yeah. Our pastor grew up in all denominations. He grew up COGIC, you know, Baptist.

Horace Hough

Does it have a lean? Does it have a Pentecostal lean or a Baptist lean? Or is it just a good hybrid of everything?

Interviewee

It's a good hybrid, it really is a good hybrid, but you'll get a little bit of everything. And he'll--and he'll preface it with when he, you know, catering to the audience like this is this is referencing, you know, his, his COGIC background. This is, you know, when he lived in the (redacted), this is what these are the songs that he held dear. So those are the types of things that he will preface just so that people are prepared, you know, and open. They're not just, you know, handed some of our you know...especially with the music, I think that's one of the more sensitive subjects at nondenominational church.

Horace Hough

Okay--and the demographic of the congregation--is it multicultural, or is it primarily Black?

Interviewee

It's multicultural. I would say it's predominantly white right now, but not by not by a large margin. Our pastor is Black. But we have a campus pastor who's white, but the church is very diverse. And he wants it--That's intentional. He wants it to stay that way.

Horace Hough

All right, thank you. That was just some data I wanted to have on you as we were just kind of moving through the questions. One of the questions was: which of the following best reflects how you understand the spiritual role of a pastor? The options were: coach, shepherd, teacher, theologian, father, other, right. You picked teacher, and I just wanted to, again, elaborate a little bit more what that means to you.

Interviewee

Teacher more so than anything, just because he's studied, you know, and I just see, you know, that's his full time--that's his full-time thing. That's his expertise. That's what he's poured his gifts and energies into. So as far as teaching, I do think that's, for me, that's, that's the primary--primary role: teaching the Word of God. And I think a lot of you know, if they're teaching Bible, I think as a result of that, you get all the other stuff.

Horace Hough

Okay. All right. Thank you. So now, I want to

Interviewee

Can I just say one other thing about that too?

Horace Hough

Sure.

Interviewee

Um, what I like about looking at a pastor, as a teacher, it makes them more human to me. So I don't have an expectation of perfection. Because you know, the things that he's

teaching, we're not expected to be perfect, and neither is he. So that's one thing that sticks out more so because, you know, I've been in churches where the pastor is the rockstar that can do no wrong, and how it devastates the church when they're being human. Just being who they are.

Site Team Representative

With that, and I'm sorry, I'm gonna interject right here with that (redacted), do you feel that seeing them more as human, makes you more confident in them or like more confident in their teaching, but also gives you the onus to kind of like, kind of like we do like with medical stuff? Yes, you trust the doctor, but you get a second opinion? Do you feel that it makes you more comfortable in doing that? When you see someone as a teacher and not like "the rockstar, he can do no wrong" and all that?

Interviewee

Yeah. Because there are times I disagree

Site Team Representative

Yeah

Interviewee

And I'm okay to do that.

Site Team Representative

Yeah, it makes you feel more informed and educated as a Christian, by looking at him at that.

Interviewee

Yeah. Because then it opens me up for, when I'm looking at pastors in general, as teachers, what he is teaching is based on the Bible, but it's his interpretation or his perception. And I give the example about the turn the other cheek reference that, that you had shared with us. He didn't, he doesn't teach that. And so the context, he doesn't teach it. So when it came up, I was I felt confident enough to ask him about it. And he was like, I'm gonna look into that. And, you know, it made a difference. And it changed a lot of things. He doesn't teach that anymore. Like that passive, leave yourself open to someone else hurting you. It's not like that. It's being empowered. So, um, that's what I like, you know, when I, they're not--if you're a teacher, you understand that you're always learning as well.

Site Team Representative

Exactly. Yep. Yep. Yeah.

Horace Hough

Thank you. Now, later on in the questionnaire, we started talking about what you look for in a church. What are issues that you wish the--I said the Black church--would pay more attention to? Things of that nature. One of the cool things that you mentioned was you wish more churches offered online, a gallery for fellowship, video/video. And although there's various methods, you might be able to do that with, whether it's something like a zoom gallery or hop-in, or whatever the case is. I wanted to know, what benefit do you feel that offers you over, let's say, just typing in a chat.

Interviewee

Um, it--you're more connected. Like you get, you get to see their-- you get to see people's faces and you see how they respond to what they're hearing how they're responding to the word, it's encouraging when you you're online, in your home, especially during COVID--isolated-and you know, I'm being transparent, you might feel silly, sometimes wanting to raise your hands in the air and run around the kitchen, because you got a shout moment, but like, seeing that, and seeing other people in that, it just it creates an environment to me for worship and praise and encouragement, versus typing. And plus, you know, everybody isn't, you know, they're not type-savvy. People like me, I'm OCD when I see people misspelling words. It completely throws me off. So--(Laughter) Like what is this? I can't read this I don't know what you're saying. But, um, but I think more than anything, just seeing people's faces, hearing their voices. That just, that speaks to my soul, because I'm a people person. So even though I, I'm, I'm happy for the opportunity to be connected the way we are right now--You know, that's, that's another level that I would like to see, just because I mean, it's, it's better. To me, it is just better when you can see people and talk to them and watch their expressions and things like that. If I can't touch you, I at least want to be able to see your face and see you smiling and stuff like that.

Horace Hough

Okay. Awesome. Thank you. Moving in that same area, there were two big questions I wanted to ask you about. And this is kind of what I'll wrap up with today. One of them was as a Black professional, what are some issues to which the Black church needs to pay more attention? And you said corporate giving opportunities and partnerships? And I just wanted to ask that you elaborate on that? Please elaborate on what you meant by corporate giving opportunities and partnerships.

Interviewee

I think it's, I think it's essential to look at the church, like a business. In a certain regard, this is, this is God's business. So being a steward, being financially savvy, when it comes to the resources that you have, ensures that, that it can grow, you know, it can, it can last, and it can grow and expand. If the goal is to, you know, reach as many people you need money for that. And where I see a lot of churches either aren't growing, or they're dying off, is because of finance. So when, when you know, when the church members aren't tithing. That's a negative, that's a negative thing. You have to, you know, just like just like us: multiple streams of income. So if the people aren't tithing, you can't have a staff

and a pastor who devoting their time and energy, and their salary is totally dependent on sinful folks. (Laughter) Whether they're gonna be obedient, because, you know, that's why the Bible talks about it so much, because we're not! We're not gonna do it, you know, for the most part, people aren't, that's a struggle for people. Um, so multiple streams of income. And, and also, um, as a member, I think we are called, to take care of our pastors. So what happens? Do they have health care? You know, do they--do they have a 401 K? Do they, you know, is there a contingency plan for the pastor and their family, you know, outside of your feeding them on Sunday, like, that's, that's not--that doesn't pay the light bills or anything like that. So I just think for what the church in the community--how they benefit. I think that there, there should be some benefit there. I don't believe that God called pastors to be poor. I honestly don't, I don't think that and I just think that, you know, we're supposed to be, you know, set apart, but we still have to operate in the real world and you need money, you need connections, and you need people who, who, who are on the board or, you know, making the decisions that are financially savvy, so that so that something like COVID doesn't wipe out, you know, decades or hundreds of years of work in building a church, because that will decimate--that decimates a community just like, very similar to how they were, you know, the charter schools--busing children out of the neighborhood--when the people who live in the neighborhood don't go to the same church, there's a disconnect with that entire community. So the impact is so important that it should, it should be handled with the highest regard as it relates to everything as it relates to money, and how they, how they handle their staff, and their business. I just, I think it's important.

Horace Hough

So for corporate giving, you're thinking more like, grants?

Interviewee

Grants? Yep. Grants, educating or taking people aside to explain to them--the people who are employed, like that demographic that you're talking about having jobs--is there a company match? You know, is there you know, are there programs out there that match dollar for dollar or where they get incentives, you know, through your, through your employer, a lot of people miss out on that. A lot of people like--that, that's that carrot that they dangle, knowing no one's going to do it, you know, they're not going to take advantage of it, because they're not sure how. I think having seminars showing people how to do that, or looking for organizations, corporate organizations, that are in alignment with your church's mission, cuz then they got to give away money. They got to give it to somebody, why, why not the church? You know, so, um, I think that's important, because a relationship like that with the right with the right organization, you know, has far reaching impact that, you know, it could be something like, like the church that was close to my house in (redacted). I can't think of--(redacted) is the head of the church, it's by (redacted), they have the epicenter across from the... So they built this huge facility, conference rooms, music studios, bowling alleys, and they have partnerships with all of these companies. So there's a [restaurant] in there. Like I said,

there's a music studio where they can, people can record albums-- gospel albums have been recorded there. So those types of connections bring so much to that church, and so much impact in the community. So you got members in the church, who have access to jobs working, you know, when they're bringing in all of these people. Access to jobs and resources and training, you know, that they wouldn't have had if they didn't have those partnerships. So I think that's a great idea. As long as it's in alignment, you know, what the church is doing?

Horace Hough

Okay. So, quick, random questions, a little bit off of that topic, but I just want to pick your brain on them. If you were to, even if you do now, if you were to participate in a church, would you rather volunteer your professional skills and your professional expertise? Or would you rather volunteer something that you do as a hobby?

Interviewee

I don't know. Because I don't--I'm, I'm the type of person I go where they ask me to go. Like, you know...

Horace Hough

Do you have a preference?

Interviewee

Um, yeah. And I think when we say my professional expertise, even though I'm a (redacted), I'm an educator. So that's where my passion is. So, you know, I teach, I teach the kids in Sunday school, because that combines my passion with teaching with just my true passion. Like, I don't want anybody to go to hell. I really don't-I want everybody to make it in especially my kids. I need them. I need them to get in. So you know, I combine that, but there's also within our church, the idea of you serve in at least two places you serve where you are, where you have, like a gift that your passion, and you serve either in your stretch ministry or where you're needed. So, um, believe it or not hospitality, even though I'm a hospitable, you know, person. That's my stretch ministry, because I don't, I don't like to serve people who aren't nice. (Laughter) Right?

Horace Hough

Right, right.

Interviewee

So I have to, you know, that's the thing where I'm making sure I can not be- be a hindrance, no matter what the situation. So I, I would say: a combination. I would prefer to teach, I would prefer that. I would love for us to have a health and wellness ministry, I would love to do that. But, you know, at the end of the day, wherever they ask me to serve, that's where I'm gonna go. And I'll let the Holy Spirit tell me like, "this ain't for you." They--look, they'll fire me. If it's not appropriate for me. (Laughter)

Site Team Representative

Do you think if you started a (redacted) ministry, that it would feel too much like work for you to feel like you were also doing ministry? Or would you feel that you were being fulfilled in ministry?

Interviewee

It wouldn't feel like work. Because they ask me anyway, you know, that it's unofficial. But they ask me anyway, they call and they ask, and I always make time, you know, for stuff like that. I've even, you know, made unofficial appointments after church, you know, people want to talk to me, and we go in the room, and they pull out a little bag of pills. And I love it. I love that they, they reach out to me for that, especially outside of work. Because believe it or not, my family does not do that. People who actually, they don't see me as a (redacted). So it's really good in that, in that capacity.

Site Team Representative

"A prophet has no honor in his own home." (Laughter) But, but what you said was good there because it feels like what you're saying is your professional expertise enables you to minister more to people. Because you love doing it, you're confident in it, you already have the educational expertise, this is your field. So you feel comfortable doing it. And you like you say you always make time like--that's the ministry. You always make time for the people who have those kinds of questions. So technically, your profession helps you minister more effectively. Or, I shouldn't say technically that I should phrase it in a question and say, Do you feel that your professional expertise helps you to minister in ways that you wouldn't be able to minister without?

Interviewee

Yes, because I feel that my profession is my ministry. It is--it is--I feel that that's the gift God gave me. So even when I'm showing up at work, the job that I do. I'm fulfilled in that because I'm like, Okay-- I'm using my gift to help people. And I take that very seriously. I know, I joke around a lot. And there are other challenges from a professional standpoint, but the work that I do. I learned that a long time ago, that I would--I would truly be successful if I did the work that I do as if I am doing it for God. So whether they asked me about it at church or not, I still look at it--I look at that as my ministry. Even at work.

Horace Hough

Awesome. Thank you for that. Final question, and then I'll let you go. Okay. With the expansion of virtual church, right, due to COVID, would you--and I'm not asking you this personally as a favor, I'm just mean in general as a consideration--Would you ever be willing to participate in other church's ministries around the country virtually? So would you be willing to start--this might sound weird--but start a (redacted) ministry. Maybe you don't run it, but kick it off at a church in (redacted), if they invited you.

Interviewee

Um, definitely. I would--I would love something like that.

APPENDIX E: PASTOR INTERVIEWS

**All interviews have been severely redacted for anonymity and relevance.*

Interview 1:

Horace Hough

What have been, or are, the most important issues and concerns for your Black professionals?

Pastor 1

Some of them have come in and gotten involved. They have joined the choir, they have joined the Usher board, believe it or not. We have missionaries. We have other organizations and ministries in the church...marriage ministry, and you have quite a few professionals there. The liturgical dance ministry, which I'm always amazed at, because that group has copious Black professionals, being lawyers, PhDs, doctors, you know, but they love to dance. And so they are involved in the dance ministry. But there's also a group that just don't feel that there's much for them to do. So they are, you know, they are Sunday worship, for the most part. Many of them have said, you know, I don't do the choir, I don't do the usher board. And they don't dance. To be honest, many have, but many have not found something to do within the church that they're really interested in. You know one woman, she's a college professor, and she's interested in history and all of that, and, you know, her interests were good...but, hey, there was really nothing for her to do.

Horace Hough

Have you noticed more or less involvement in those ministries over the years? Professionals 20 years ago, were they interested in...was it the same flip? I guess I should ask, was it the same split 20 years ago as it is now?

Pastor 1

I don't know that I have done a real in-depth analysis. Church has changed from where church was years ago. But we still have a number of professionals, you know, teachers, principals...and they get involved, many of them are officers in a church. Also, many of them have been great givers. There may be a little drop off in young professionals. But what baffles me, is when we get a record of giving, we have some strong, strong young professionals, and we don't even know them, and they give, they give really good. I hate to go to the offering bar. But it's like, we don't know them. They're not really in the life of the church, but they support the church. (redacted) ...so we have these people who come on Sunday, but they're not really involved in the life of the church. And many of them may not be involved because professionally they can't.

Horace Hough

Has (your church) ever made an intentional effort to reach Black professionals?

Pastor 1

No, it's just evolved. When I got to (church), there were people who were not professionals at all, and you had quite a few professionals. And that's the kind of church I found for the most part. But we certainly have not targeted them. But maybe in creating some of the ministries that we created...you know, as you create ministries then you know, maybe the attraction is there.

Horace Hough

Have you noticed that your professionals are attracted to a certain style of preaching or certain content in your preaching?

Pastor 1

Okay, so now that's a good question. I have noticed that you know, now (church) is a very charismatic church, very lively, and it's certainly a turnoff to many, many people. But there's also a group of young professionals, who may be young professionals but they grew up...they may have grown up in typical, as you say, typical Baptist churches... or they have maybe those who were just not happy with their very sterile episcopalian services or whatever...and so, I know that our style of worship, which is very lively, you know...somebody may sing a song and we may never get to preach...or we may have a great praise break, and they not gonna jump in dance, but there's something about it that really nurtures them. I think worship is within the context of personality and likes and dislikes. And you may have a doctor who is not gonna be very expressive, but there was something about the worship that they identified with. So they stay and they love it. They come, they support the church. I guess what I would have to say is you do what you do, and then trust God to give the increase. Because there are people who will be attracted to the worship style. So you may be a church, like (redacted) which is charismatic, and they teach you must speak in tongues, and they are replete with professionals. But, they don't shout. They just lift their hands and that kind of thing. You have a church like (redacted), where people will run and jump and dance and everything. And you have PhDs and doctors doing that. And then you'd have a church like (redacted) where most of the (redacted) professionals went. Very much in the middle, not real, structured and staid, but certainly not like us. And so people shop around and they find what fits for them, even the young professional.

Horace Hough

You've already talked about the ecological impact of the church. Do you feel that the work you did (in the community), do you think that also fits back into attracting professionals?

Pastor 1

Absolutely, absolutely. And, you know, yeah, anything you do in the community, because people become aware of you and what you do. So now, to be honest, [many people we served didn't leave their churches]. But I do know that we got...we got some of their [family].

Horace Hough

Are there leadership, or organizational models that you feel offend Black professionals?

Pastor 1

That's an interesting question. Well, you know, we've always been intentional about trying to utilize people and gifts. And so, we've always said, you know, bring in young ministers, you know, young officers, and try to keep youth and women before the congregation so they can see that we are inclusive. When I first got here, there were no women. And I mean, no women in leadership, none. I think young professionals are looking for a level of inclusivity. You know, so they can just kind of see. I think young professionals probably are looking for community presence, which has helped us. To know that we're doing something in the community, that it's beneficial.

Horace Hough

Have you noticed with the inclusion of younger leaders, that they like to operate differently, in terms of how they get things done, or do they pretty much acclimate to the climate that's already at the church?

Pastor 1

Do they operate differently? They do. I recently spoke with one at the church who decided that he's having this event, which is cool. But he gave me almost a (redacted) budget for this event, which will be virtual, and which there's no return. And he couldn't understand. But now, my Gen X'ers understand that. They understand that, you know, you have to look at the bigger picture...we're in a pandemic, you know, for the most part, I think they understand that a little bit more. Or they are a little bit more reasonable when you speak to them and say, "Well, no, that's nothing you want to do in the middle of a pandemic," or, you know, "is it going to pay for itself," "does it make sense?" "Is it a good investment of God's money?" You know, I think Gen X'ers are a little bit more reasonable. That has been what I have found in dealing with Gen X'ers. I think they can see the bigger picture better, better than their younger counterparts.

Horace Hough

Objectively, what does the Black church need to do or continue to do to create an environment where women will feel and know that they are respected equally to men? And that's open ended, you can answer it how you feel.

Pastor 1

I think that it depends on what they see happening and the leadership and how, you know, there's going to always be sexism. Our culture (at the church) has always been very inclusive. I never saw a woman ordained preacher (growing up), until I got to (redacted). I grew up having Women's Day, but never a women's ministry, and never events. Never a ministry that talks about what it is to be single or what it is to be Black woman, professional, you know. But all those issues were addressed while I was at (redacted). Women were very much affirmed. And so when I came to (church), we certainly imitated and expanded on that. And so having been (redacted), and having seen women preachers and women leaders, we immediately began to expand the territory there and include women.

Horace Hough

So finally... I have a small church and a community that is not primarily Black, in the slightest bit. And I'm trying to attract, again, Gen X'ers mainly. Is there anything you wish to share with me? What I might be able to do with the church? Or just something to keep in mind.

Pastor 1

Okay, so when you talk about the surrounding areas. My question is what kind of outreach is needed? And you know, most people think of Connecticut as a pretty affluent place, but most of us who have been to church in Connecticut, know that there are some communities that need outreach. So I think outreach, maybe. I think, programmatically, you have to look at your music. I think you have to look at, you know, ministries that are available. You may have to make some financial incentive and kind of lay the groundwork for a music department or a dance ministry. Just kind of see what they would be...what would be attractive to them. For all intents and purposes. The way we started the liturgical dance ministry is because we had a dancer in our congregation, and we asked her to dance one night. Because we had seen liturgical dance in (redacted). And so, it's just, you know, maybe finding people and meeting people, and giving them something to do, making them feel important. It's just kind of making people feel that no matter how big, how small, that perhaps that you see them, and are willing to take a chance on something.

Interview 2:

Horace Hough

So let me start off with the first one, which is, in your experience, and I understand your congregation is diverse...but what have been or what are the most important issues and concerns for your Black professionals? And if it helps you with the thought process, have you changed over the years?

Pastor 2

No. I mean, the largest demographic of (church) is probably, I would say, 25 to 45. That would be the largest demographic. We have an amazing professional demographic. One of the things that many of the professionals who are part of this congregation, I think, value is that they don't have to be on, in the worst experience. I have, you know, Vice President of (redacted), CEO of (redacted) was head of the ushers. I mean, so, they want to come and serve and worship. And many of them... I have a lot of corporate people...they're not coming to say, "look, this is who I am" . They enjoy being in a space where they can worship God, not have to be the center of attention, especially those with the CEO [titles] and things like that, and they honestly just want to serve God. And so we've always created those opportunities. Part of the focus of (church), we put a high premium on service in our community, there's no one in (surrounding community) who does not know us; for we seek to directly and intentionally engage the community in very creative ways. But I would say our younger, many of the professionals who are part of our congregation, enjoy the fact that they don't have to be in an environment where they have to be on, in a particular way. Where they can just come and worship God. And many, I didn't know. Some people who have come on a regular basis, I didn't realize were coming on a regular basis. You know, I can't see everybody given the sanctuary. But I will be told, "so and so comes every Sunday," "so and so is a member," and I was in shock. I would reach out to some of these people sometimes, and [they would] tell me, "we just enjoyed being there," "I just enjoyed being there," "I enjoy being at church." So I think creating that space, where they are valued, but not viewed in a performative way, given their positions, is of high value for many professionals.

Horace Hough

That's actually really good phrasing: valued, but not viewed in a performative way. Now, your church has grown tremendously during your time there. Did the original congregation reflect just a smaller version of the demographics you have now? Or has it shifted?

Pastor 2

It shifted. I think when I got there, they had about (redacted) members on roll. And it was kind of a small...(redacted) members on roll, maybe about (redacted) on Sundays. And everybody knew one another. Many people were related, some professional, but you know, just hard-working folks from the community. And I think that, you know, when [I]

got there, it just started attracting, one, younger people for sure. Because I was (redacted) when I got there. And then, because of the way we were doing ministry, it just started attracting different groups. The demographics quickly shifted. And so you start seeing a different kind of person joining church. Again, more professional, more college educated, and more younger people. Millennials for sure. So you got a lot of Generation X, and then you start getting tons of millennials coming in.

Horace Hough

So my second question was, which you've already kind of rolled into, I normally ask, have you put in intentional effort into reaching Black professionals?

Pastor 2

No. So here's what I did. My first, "official meeting" with the official board at the time, you know Deacons and trustees, I asked them, "who is your target, who you're trying to attract to the church?" And they'd never been asked that question. They said, "well Pastor, whoever wants to come." And I said, "oh that's not good enough." I said, "next door to this church is a (redacted) restaurant. I said, if you go into this (redacted) restaurant, you tell them you want a (redacted), they are going to tell you to go to (redacted)." And they will not feel compelled to change their menu based on your requests. Because they know who their clientele is. And they cater to the clientele. I said, "so if you're not clear about who you're trying to attract, you're really not hitting anyone." Right? Which, what happens is then the church experience becomes a reflection of the comfort level of those who are already in the building. Right? If there's no intentionality about who you're seeking to attract. So I said, in that moment, we have three targets that we're going to be looking for. One, the traditional target for all churches - in name not in practice - which is the "unchurched". The "unchurched" is always a target by name, but not in practice. Because again, if you create - and you know this - you create spaces to keep those who are present feeling comfortable, and they are the "church," you're not necessarily intentionally creating the space for those who are unchurched. Second, was a group (redacted) who had grown up in church. When they got old enough to be over it, they were over it. So how do we reach those people who got weary of church, were over-churched...that second target. And the third target was the most critical one. To me, it was those who have been damaged and hurt by the church. So those three groups were our three targets, and they still are targets. And we didn't necessarily create programs to attract, there was no evangelistic teaching on how to do it. We created the space where those three groups would feel at ease, and do different kinds of programming that was not the norm for church. And acknowledge some things about the deficiencies and shortcomings of the church. And the messages and the teaching on alignment. And so there was nothing that said, hey, we want to target professionals, but professionals are in those three groups. Right? They are there, and they will show up. And I'm convinced of that, not only because of what has happened (redacted), but it happened at a time where the building (needed work), the music was not that great, the sound was not good. I was like, Lord why would people want to come to the church? And that message, those teachings, the intentionality, people were still coming. In spite of the way the building

looked, in spite of (the sound) In spite of the fact the music was okay. But it was the Word. It was a teaching. It was the (redacted) way in which I was going about ministry.

Pastor 2

(Regarding members who don't want the church to change)

And then the reality is, a lot of people like that, you know, they could never verbalize it, but some of them are content with the church fading, as long as they are there for them, right? And I think as a pastor...(redacted) I pastored a church in (redacted). When I got to that church in (redacted), it was literally (redacted) members. Now, when I left in (redacted), it was up to about (redacted). [Those first] members were all related, right? So it was one of those things I had to kind of deconstruct, move people, but it was growing. So people were coming. And I think that you will always have that fight to protect what is familiar, and know that many people will pay lip service to the idea of wanting to expand and grow but don't actually do the work. And I also had to be realistic about what, what growth looked like. I mean, I never went to any church saying I want to hit this number. But I had to be realistic based on demographics. What would be the possibilities of this space? So, you know, I think that pastors, especially younger pastors, I think we come in without surveying the land and have unrealistic expectations about what this space can become. And then when it doesn't become that based on expectation, we think somehow we're not doing a good job, we're not being effective. And that means you really are not being realistic about where you are. It would have been insane for me to think, oh, God, I can't wait till the day...when I was in (redacted), it would be such and such.

Pastor 2

(Regarding pastoring a church whose culture is unattractive to the pastor)

One thing I said is that I could not lead a church that I would not attend. And so I had to be intentional. Now my approach is gonna be different. For me, I could not lead or pastor a church I could not join. And when I got to (church), I would not have joined that church. And so very quickly, it became clear that things had to shift, not so it could be my church, but it could be a church that I could be a member of. If I'm going to lead it, I can't lead something I would not be a part of myself. I would be fraudulent. It'd be disingenuous to who I am and to the church. So it begins...I tell people...it begins with teaching and you being clear about the direction - your own theological direction - and the vision you have. Because if you're clear about the vision of where this church can go on that you've received, felt from God, then that means every moment of engagement is always a teachable moment that feeds into the vision. You meeting with Deacons is a teachable moment feeding into the vision. [Meeting with]Trustees, teachable moment feeding into the vision. Everything became a teachable moment. And, the biggest thing, and I give all pastors this, is that you have to let folks realize, especially in a church where you have a lot of professionals, there's nobody else in this church who can do what I'm doing. How do I demonstrate that? To show that I'm qualitatively different than anybody who's ever been in this position before me. And that means you demonstrate that

by your capacity to teach and train. And so what did I do? I had to show that there was nobody who was in this position who had ever been like me, and then they see that. You have people, professionals in other spheres, in your church—you can't be presumptuous enough to go into their space and think that you can run their business. The problem is, that because of how many of our colleagues run their churches, anybody thinks they can run the church. Right? So you have to make it clear, no, you may be smart *here*, but you don't know *this*. And what happens is, that's what we don't show—our training. We don't demonstrate our capacity. ...And so I said, you would never read a book on human anatomy and think you're going to tell an internal specialist how to perform. Can't do that with me either. The only way they know that, is that you show the qualitative difference between you and anybody else, right? This is a profession, this is a vocation. And you demonstrate that, not by preaching, because anybody can preach. It's by other pieces that you infuse, and you always create opportunities to teach, and to lead with your expertise in this field. If I teach Sunday school, and I'm simply just using (redacted) Sunday school book, I'm not showing any expertise of my field, right? When I begin to teach, and really show critical, historical method of investigating the scriptures and give it to folk...because the biggest misconception you hear preachers say, "oh, you can't take this everyday stuff to church." That's a lie. Yeah, you can. You can. You just gotta love the people enough to give it to them in a way that they receive it. Because they want it. They want it. I tell my friends, I say listen, "if I like beef, and the only kind of beef I've ever eaten was a McDonald's hamburger, that skews my view of beef." And you may say, "I could tell somebody, there's no better beef than a McDonald's hamburger." Until somebody brings up a grass-fed filet mignon. So what do you do? I'm not gonna tell you that hamburger is bad. I'm gonna give you that filet and let you make the decision. So that's what we do. We've got to be serving that up, every time we step in our meetings. We come prepared. I'm not just gonna be talking, I'm gonna show you this is my training. And then, you know, you couple that with some victories, you know, then people have no choice but to follow.

Horace Hough

Are there leadership organizational models that you feel attract or offend Black professionals?

Pastor 2

I can't say for sure that there are particular models. I mean, of course, Black professionals are used to corporate models. What I will say is, [there are] two things that many professionals appreciate in our churches. When I first started pastoring, one of my professors at (redacted) told me, he brought me into his office, he was a pastor, he said, "Remember this: no matter how people fight you kicking and screaming about stuff you want to do, at the end of the day, our people want to be led. People want to be led." He said, "So lead, lead." That's one thing. Secondly, what I realized is that many professionals like organization. The model is not important, it's not as critical, as long as they know you're organized. Because, you've been in this long enough to know how many churches are not organized. And they value organization, and they value leadership, and they value professionalism. Right? They value organization,

professionalism, and leadership. The model is not as critical, as long as there's organized structure in place, and professionalism. And that's what we sometimes lack in our institutions, the professionalism part. You know, we just want to do stuff, but I think those three things make clear you are the leader. One, that there is an organizational structure in place that is not based on a kind of despotic tyranny. Right? And then, three, there's a level of professionalism. So I think when they see that you're committed to lead, that you're professional, and you are committed to a strong structure, that really makes it easy for people to find their space and way in the church, in the institution, and find a place to serve and engage in the institution. And it's not complicated. It's not difficult. I think that's what people value the most.

Horace Hough

What makes serving Black professionals different than serving other demographics in the church? In your experience.

Pastor 2

Yeah, I think it goes back to what I said before. We've never really intentionally targeted particular demographics. The way we did the targets, demographics were based on issues. It was issue based. So it wasn't necessarily demographic in terms of personality base. So I would say one of the things that I take seriously, as I take from how I understand discipleship, is that if I look at Jesus's ministry, there's a particular kind of target that is being - I think, in his preaching and teaching, you know - those who are marginalized, those who are viewed on the outskirts of culture, those ostracized, those are the people who primarily, I believe, found themselves attracted to that ministry. But part of it is that the Jesus movement in the language of the Jesus movement, for me, is transcendent. Well, that's critical, because I think transcendent narratives don't necessarily hit, intentionally hit, directed targets. It's looking for a language and a way of being and showing up, that hits all people regardless of cultural, socio-economic status. That's what makes it transcendent. So, for me, given the nature of your project, for me, it's good to be able to say, "Listen, we never intended those kinds of reaches." But the way we've shaped ministry has reached a broad spectrum of people, from professionals, the non-professionals, to white, to Black. To even, you know, we have a good amount of (redacted) who regularly attend. And, people who are (redacted) who attend. So I think that whether you're professional, whether you are socio-economically challenged, whether you are just a hard worker, no matter who you are, here's what I realized, - and this was I think some preaching, honestly, some by peers and colleagues miss - no matter who you are along the spectrum, you laugh, you cry, you hurt, you bleed, you mourn, you despair, all those things. So if you start speaking to the issues that are common among the human condition, you will reach every demographic. And every demographic will find a resting place in that ministry. So the problem is that at the heart of what becomes a fixation on work, is of course a preaching moment, which is the smallest part of what we do, But oftentimes, here's the issue. And I don't know whether you agree or not, most preachers, when they preach, have preachers in mind as the audience. They are preaching and thinking about themselves and preachers, not the people in front of them. Which means that you and I hear preachers with a certain ear, right? Versus how a congregant

may hear preachers with a particular ear. And we're listening to preachers based on, you know, how do they set up the text? You know, all that stuff. Whereas a person who's listening to us is not listening with preaching in mind, they are listening with their issue in mind. If I got a CEO whose mother died from COVID, and I got a woman who lives in (redacted), whose mother died from COVID. In that moment, there's no difference between that. So that's what I think. I wanted the demographics to be issue based, because then you hit a broad spectrum of people. So I think that's the thing I'm intentional about. We have a large amount of professionals in that church, but that's not a target. It is the issues that's the target.

Horace Hough

So my follow up question to that...you can easily say that's part of my last answer, but if there's something extra, you want to add, feel free. What style and content of preaching attracts professionals most in your experience?

Pastor 2

I am... 95% of my preaching is narrative. And I'm a narrative preacher. And I think for me, of course, I'm biased because I think that's the most effective. Because, again, it's the model Jesus lays before us. It is telling a story. Everybody can find their way in the story. I remember Gardner Taylor, when asked how he prepares his sermons, he said, "well, once you get a text..." He said, "find the street with a text lives." He said, "walk it down the street a few times. Familiarize yourself with the neighborhood of the text." He said, "talk to some of the text's neighbors and see what they think about the text." He said, "and once you walk up and down the street where a text lives, familiarize yourself with the neighborhood and the neighbors..." He said, "then go knock on the door of the text." And that's at the heart of his narrative style. Gardner is a narrative preacher. Gardner was, to me, the epitome of preaching. You preach in such a way that as long you're telling the story, the narrative, people find their place in the story. Right. He once wrote, his Lyman Beecher lectures, the name escapes me, anyway, I think he was quoting another preacher. Maybe it was Spurgeon he was quoting. But the idea that if you're willing to be introspective, you go down within yourself enough, you are bound to come up with another human being. Which means at the end of the day, part of what makes narrative preaching powerful and impactful is the willingness of the preacher to be vulnerable and transparent, not only in an exegetical moment, but within the preaching moment. So it is our authenticity and our transparency, and our vulnerability, that is really the superpower we have in preaching it. That is our superpower. That authenticity is our superpower. But if that can come through in the narrative in the story, when you really paint that scene in such a way where I can take you to the scene, and then let you just run throughout the scene, you'll find your place. Cause people remember a story, they won't remember a point.

Horace Hough

Are there certain languages or certain images, rituals, symbols to which you think professionals respond?

Pastor 2

Yeah. The simplest language you could find to communicate the most impactful ideas about the kingdom. Because I think people forget, we are sitting here today talking about teaching and preaching, about someone who lived over 2000 years ago, and there were no four-syllable words. We forget that. So you know, when I was in (redacted), my philosophy professor said, "the mark of a philosopher is not how well you communicate to other philosophers, but how you communicate philosophy to those who are unlearned." Ernest Hemingway was known for simple, profound sentences. Short paragraphs. He changed the writing of 20th century. Not 19th century, complicated, long run-on, Oscar Wilde sentences, but the short sentences. Simple. We forget that, and I was reading this book by Kurt Vonnegut on writing, because I've been writing a lot. So I think simple language that is transferable and easily remembered.

Pastor 2

(regarding professionals feeling comfortable in church)

Many professionals do not like being in spaces, I've encountered, where they have to perform. So again, that kind of space where you deconstruct all the garbage, the baggage, it becomes attractive. I have to just slip in. Because Monday through Friday, I got to perform already. You know, and I want to be able to seamlessly pass through and be good with that.

Pastor 2

(concerning Generation X...)

A lot would say we identify with the "brush harbor" experience. But we find ourselves on the plantation because we are still looking for master's validation. And we're not gonna say it that way. But that's the truth. So in that regard, no matter what you're doing liberation theology, any form of it, you're still being held bound and captive, because at the end of the day, there's still a thirst for validation. (redacted)...Generation X experienced a lot of benefits from the civil rights struggle. They were the first to experience the benefits. Right? So part of the benefits was access - so that post-civil rights generation, the young boomers and Generation X. We were granted access, watch this, but we want to keep it real. But keeping a real really meant an adept ability at code switching. Some of them, I'm like, you're real, but at the same time, you want that validation, which undermines a lot of the work you do in your brush harbor worship. It becomes inauthentic.

Horace Hough

What do you feel the Black church needs to do to create an environment where women will feel and know that they are respected equal to men?

Pastor 2

One, if we want to culture change, its a combination of two things, language and practice. Language has to first lead the way. And neither can betray the other. Language cannot betray the practice and practices cannot betray the language. So one, in our churches, in terms of affirming women, there has to be a shifting in the language. Now part of the simplest way to engage that is through inclusive language. Right, that's one of the simplest ways as a leader to really lead the church. Why is inclusive language important? Well, you don't have to sit there and argue with them theologically. You just use the songs and in Scripture, if God is spirit and we worship God in spirit and in truth, then spirit does not conform to roleplay. So on a very basic level, even what we say is counted by actions. Now, yeah, we say "he", and I do at times, it'll come out because that's kind of what we've been shaped in. More times than not, I would say, 75 85% of time, I just say God. So I think it begins with language and language is also connected to teaching...what you teach as a leader, and also the language that you're intentional about as a leader. Then you couple that with practice. I started putting more women Deacons and trustees. I just started putting women in leadership. It wasn't just me coming and saying, we changed it while I'm teaching. Language. And then engaging practices.

Horace Hough

To reach Black professionals. What do you feel is absent from Black church ministry? Or what needs to be addressed?

Pastor 2

How about...I'll say this. Instead of saying it was absent...maybe it's not the absence, maybe it's a presence of actually these distinctions we make in the church. Maybe we have too many distinctions and labels that help to have us engaging people in certain ways, right? So we'll say things like, not just professionals, how do we handle gay people in the church? How do we handle them? We go on and on and on, versus how do we handle human beings? So it goes with how I've been leading the whole conversation. I look at human beings and how we minister and speak to human beings, with different points of suffering, and different points of hurting, and different points of celebrating, different points of joys. There are several commonalities in our humanity that can become a touchstone for the work we do in church. I just don't want to reinforce certain hierarchies, social hierarchies, I don't want to just replicate those in the church.

Pastor 2

(regarding creating ministry opportunities)

You create ministry opportunities based on need not ideas. Based on issue and need, not ideas. So I always tell people, a great ministry idea doesn't necessarily mean a great ministry need. And if you shape the work you do based on need...how do you know a need? How do you assess need? Through relationship building, like any other thing in the congregation. And you start seeing what are the needs of the congregation. Obery Hendricks book, Politics of Jesus, when he said, "you treat the people's needs as holy."

What do we really need, versus what you like doing. In a lot of our churches, ministries are based on the hobbies of a few select people, not a need of the congregation.

Interview 3:

Horace Hough

I'll start with the first question: What are-for the professionals you have in your congregation-What do you find to be their most important needs that need to be fulfilled?

Pastor 3

So I think that the professionals in my congregation, academics are over represented. Seminary trained people are over-represented, like there's just a bunch of them, a bunch of preachers, or a bunch of people who went to seminary, maybe who are figuring out their vocational thing. Doing other things-(redacted). Most of them love the church, grew up in church, but became differently persuaded in terms of their own kind of theological and social commitments. And they wanted to be in a progressive context that felt like church. And so (church), for them represents the best of both worlds. They don't have a lot of needs as it relates to pastoral care, per se. You know, they don't necessarily want a call from me, they don't, you know, they're not in the hospital, their needs are different than our older members in that regard. But so what they want is to come to church and get decent preaching that doesn't-that comports with their social commitments and political commitments and their understanding of the world. You know, some of them have kids-but I don't think they're motivated primarily by that. I think they're motivated primarily by the political and social commitments that I and the church represent, and coupled with a church that feels like something, church that feels familiar, like, they're not the people who want to go to church in warehouses, you know, with the lighting and staging and. They want to go to church in a place that feels and looks like church, but where the content isn't offensive to their progressive sensibilities.

Horace Hough

Did you put in an intentional effort to draw that demographic? Or was it just kind of a natural growth?

Pastor 3

No. But your framing makes me think about, you know, what I would do intentionally. No, I didn't, I didn't do anything intentional. No, I didn't. You know, some of them are people who I have associations with in other parts of my life, or, you know, that I ran into, or friends of friends or connections of friends or whatever. But no, I took more of the "if you build it, they will come" mode.

Horace Hough

What's the demographic of the neighborhood that the church is in?

Pastor 3

It's very mixed. So we have housing projects within a couple of blocks, and then our neighborhood is gentrifying. I think we should reach out to the gentrifiers because eventually if you don't have folks among them, who are part of your congregation and community, they start complaining about noise, and they start complaining about parking. I think that good, neighborly relations are going to be really important going forward. But in a different sense, I feel like our viability and validity as a congregation is determined by whether we serve well, the poor people in our neighborhood. So there are two different dynamics, one has to do with the recognition that being good neighbors is going to be important. And the other has to do with a sense of mission that if the gospel isn't good news to the poor, then we're not doing it right.

Horace Hough

The demographic of professionals in your church-Do they come from the surrounding community?

Pastor 3

No. No, they're commuters. Our neighborhood-our older members, many of our older members grew up in the neighborhood, but eventually moved out. The young professionals in our congregation largely came because of me. You know, or they came because of somebody who came because of me, like a couple who are lawyers. When I was installed, there was a news thing, and they saw me and they said, "Oh, we should check that church out." And then they went to the website, watched some sermons, and then came and joined. And then they have brought friends you know, kind of repeatedly, particularly their friends who are LGBTQ who are looking for a church, like "Oh, I got a church that you can be in that's going to be affirming and welcoming to you." But people, largely the folks who are professional in the congregation, largely came either direct, because of direct contact with me or because they were moving to the city and somebody said, "This is your church. This is the place you should go." I think the sustainable growth largely comes from people who know people. Because those are folks who stay. I mean, you know, there are people who may come by and like the place and maybe even join, but if they don't make a connection with somebody in the church, the likelihood is that they don't stay.

Horace Hough

Symbolically, from images, metaphor, language, all those things that you just naturally embody: What do you think, or know has been helpful for you in reaching that demographic? What language do you inherently use? What language do your currently use that you believe attracts the demographic?

Pastor 3

Yeah, I mean, I think as I said, you know, in reflection, that (graduate degrees) are overrepresented, right. As well as a certain kind of political sensibility. So, I speak the language of a certain kind of progressive politics. That's influenced (my theology and theological influences). So I think that's the key, I think. I'm a weird mix of really

progressive and left leaning policy, politics, and theology, and also I have a real deep respect for and love for the tradition. And so the people who come to (church) that's the folks who show up there-people who have both.

Site Team Representative

When you say "love for the tradition of" do you mean love for the tradition of church or Black church?

Pastor 3

Black church. Yeah, Black church. And like, reflection on the history even of the particular church. (Church) was (historic) years old. And you know, really talking about, like, what it meant to have the founding of a church. So yeah, I think the professionals in the 35 to 50 year old range that you're talking about, they come and it reminds them of their grandmother's church. Except the politics are not regressive. And so they're like, it's all that warm and fuzzy from their grandmother's church, with politics that they themselves can embrace. So that's, I think, that's the attractiveness. And I think that's, in a large [part], I mean, that's me.

Site Team Representative

Do you find that they're super concerned with the denomination or no?

Pastor 3

No. Not at all. Not a bit.

Horace Hough

Outside of procedures, outside of processes, outside of culturally problematic views for them, is there anything else that's part of the old church model-Black church model that you think would offend them?

Pastor 3

Yeah. So I am the pastor, but I am not hierarchical in the way I manage that. I'm not hierarchical, much sometimes, to the frustration of some people who want more of a "do what I say" type. I think the younger generation- not only Gen X, but also millennials and even from what I can figure out about Gen Z, are still trying to see what they are going to be as adults, because they're just coming into adulthood-they want [to be] more participatory. And that's been challenging, that's challenging with the older members, the Boomers, who have been in charge of the church. They struggle a little bit around what the structure of church looks like, if you have a more participatory decision-making process. That's the thing that I've been trying to get them to work on. So part of what I've been doing, I think that's important, is to explicitly make sure we have representation in the decision making parts of our church of people who are who are not only under 50, but

who are under 30. I am clear that people who are a part of the ministry should be able to participate not only in contributing to the ministry, but actually in the decision making.

Horace Hough

What do you think-and now I'm asking you objectively, looking from the outside to church, Black church in general-what do you believe the church needs to offer more to allow Black women to feel and know that they are welcomed in the church?

Pastor 3

Oh, I think this is complicated. I think it's complicated by the way that we have culturally bifurcated the sort of the accomplishments and ambition of Black women in the secular world and the limitations on Black women and their ambitions in the church. Right? I think Black women, many Black women have really accustomed themselves to patriarchy in the church, even as they fight and break glass ceilings in the world. And so, I think you have to-I don't know that this sort of fighting patriarchy is specifically the way to attract Black women who are as enmeshed in and inured to patriarchy as anybody is, right? They are as resistant to the paradigm shift that an explicit and full-frontal attack on patriarchy represents-it makes them uncomfortable too. And yet, I think that meaningful-and I mean, I believe this-that meaningful participation of men in the church requires that we dismantle patriarchy. Let me say why I say this: the way patriarchy works in the church is that women do all the work and men get to be in charge, without doing the work. Men have been functionally figureheads in churches, where all of the behind [the scenes work]-it's like 1960 and SCLC, right? The women are making all the flyers, the women are planning all the actions, the women are doing all the work, the things that make the thing happen. And King gets up and makes a speech. Ain't nobody there to hear the speech if there aren't flyers made. The planning, the actual organizing of the work is done by women, predominantly. It was true in SCLC and it's true in every church. That the organizing work that makes the church actually run, happens at the level of women. I don't care who the head of the church is. I don't care if the Deacons board is all male, the pastor is male, whatever. I don't know a church, I've never seen one, where the work-the organizing work and the nuts and bolts of how the church runs functionally-is not done by women. So part of what happens is that when that paradigm shifts, for any reason-either women decide they're not going to do the work, or women are actually at the head-it creates an identity crisis for the men in the church. That's not based on whether or not we want them to participate and even lead, but you can't lead and not work, when the leader is a woman.

(In their specific ministry context) When you look at the women we made deacons versus the men who were either deacons before or became deacons, the women were already working hard, already leading spiritually, they just didn't have the title. So they got the title, and they felt compelled to do more. So they were already running circles around the men in the church. Already. And (the male deacons) felt disempowered. Not because women [were] trying to push them aside. But the women who became deacons were

running circles around them. And they felt shown up. (The men) in that moment have a decision to make. Either they're going to step up, or they're going to step back. And patriarchy functions, patriarchy is underneath that right. Nobody shows up wanting men not to be present and active. *Nobody* shows up that way. So what I'm saying is, as it relates to attacking patriarchy, what we're really trying to do is empower men too. (redacted)...There's beauty in the work. The work itself is beautiful. The work itself is empowering. And when everybody is doing the work? Even more so. So the women Deacons don't show up to work in the Deacons ministry to show up the men or to make the men feel bad or to embarrass or shame the men. The women Deacons didn't even notice because they were still doing their thing. They had to be so exceptional to become Deacons in the first place that they were still-they were just doing what they had always done.

(continuing the conversation)

Pastor 3

And it's not women who did that to men in the church, it's patriarchy that did it to them. Because we should have never put a suit on people who weren't working in the first place. We should have never given a uniform to people who were not working in the first place. It's patriarchy that made mediocre men Deacons. And it's not male bashing on my part. The men I grew up with were upstanding dudes. They were hardworking. So I don't bear an assumption that men can't work or don't want to. I don't assume men are trifling. I just don't assume that. The men I grew up with were upstanding. So my default is that [men] work hard. But patriarchy is a challenge in church. We have asked, we've asked too little. We've been so glad a man shows up three Sundays in a row with a suit on, and we make him a Deacon. And that is a setup for failure.

Site Team Representative

When you promote the unqualified, you start disassembling the whole thing you're trying to build.

Pastor 3

And here's the thing, if you get called to a church, you've more than likely inherited a system in which they've done that. Because we want to see men, and nobody wants to see men in the church more than women. So when you're talking about what do you do, in terms of the affirmation of Black women, especially Black professional women, that's part of the story too, that you have to dismantle the internalized, the way patriarchy, you have to work against it-and even me, even I have been guilty of it. But you have to dismantle you have to work against the way patriarchy informs us all.

Interview 4:

Horace Hough

Number one is what has been or are, because you've been pastoring for some time in different areas, what have been or are the most important issues and concerns for your Black professionals? And have they changed over the years?

Pastor 4

Is it with regard to the church, the work of the church? Or just in regard to life?

Horace Hough

That's actually a great question for clarity. Let's go with life. I think if we're talking ministry, that's really going to be the core of it.

Pastor 4

I think part of what I've noticed throughout the years, would be this consistent, or this resounding, reverberating of the frame of purpose. "What is my purpose?" We've had to do several Bible studies or conversations around purpose: got my education, got a nice job, living fairly well. But I don't feel completely fulfilled. So what is my purpose for being here? So we've had to have conversations like that. If I were to push it further, it would be "What is a calling for life?" I know, I'm not called to preach. But what kind of calling am I supposed to be engaged in? Or am I supposed to answer, and how do I know that I'm called to do this? Or is this just something I like to do? Is this something I'll do for a few minutes? A few days? A lot of that. And with that, on that few days piece, it comes with the notion of: do I have to do something for an extended period of time to be effective at doing it? Can I do it for this limited amount of time and check it off my list? Or can I move on? One of the young adults who comes through here, who is in that age range, said "no, we don't stay on jobs for 40 years, 30 years? I don't do that? Why would I do that? I fulfilled my purpose for this place over these five, seven years. I'm moving on to the next thing." And so I think making sure that we're understanding placement in the world, why am I here? What is my purpose? Beyond that I think many, or some of the things that may have some notion, may have changed, were "does the church have relevance for me in this season of my life? How is this relevant for me?" Now, over the last year, most of us have found some relevance in much of what is happening in the world. And we've been able to re-speak to it, or try to be engaged in it. But relevance has been a very consistent theme. Primarily asking, is the church relevant in times like these. And we've tried to have a positive response to that. But yeah, I think relevance/purpose will definitely be one of the top things and then, relevance of the church for such a time as this.

Horace Hough

So I have a quick follow up with that then, considering just out of doing ministry, you can pick up on that from that group. Have you ever put an intentional effort into reaching Black professionals?

Pastor 4

No, I have not. Our church is blessed in that we have always been a church that has had Black professionals. The first pastor, erudite gentleman, attracted professionals. And the learned types, to the degree that we were labeled a "silk stocking" bourgeoisie church. So I don't think that I've ever had to do anything aside from-and that relevance always resonates with me-aside from trying to maintain some relevance with regard to the ministries of the church and my own personal ministry. So I think ensuring that I understood the times and understood what (church) should do, I don't make a pointed effort to attract Black professionals, I think Black professionals attract one another. And that has been the reality of our church for at least (redacted) years. Black professionals attract one another.

Horace Hough

What makes serving them different than serving other demographics in the church? And you already kind of established that a little bit with the purpose and the relevance piece, although that can be argued to span wider than just them. Are there any other areas?

Pastor 4

They're doing well. And often we have been duped into believing that most Black folk in church are not. And so they're living a lifestyle, I mean, we were dealing with people who are living very very, very nice lifestyles. And so, you know, the recurring refrain of "even though you broke..." that doesn't work. They're not. Then... We're not broke, we're doing well, matter of fact we're waiting on you to get finished so I can go down and get on my yacht and hang out the rest of this Sunday afternoon. Now, I almost didn't come because I thought I wanted to go golfing before. So for me-and I did not grow up in an upper middle class or middle class family-I grew up poor, or close to poor, whatever that range is going to be called, and so I had to learn to adjust both my mentality and my vocabulary to accommodate a congregation of people who are doing well, who have arrived, I mean, they have the multiple degrees. They have the corner offices. They are in a few instances, not a whole lot, but in a few instances they are already millionaires. So you know, my biggest challenge is getting them to tithe. But it's not because they don't have it to tithe.

Horace Hough

If I could piggyback that, Connecticut is like most states where regardless of the reputation there are people who have a lot and people who have little. There are areas in Connecticut where people are really struggling, but as expected, there are also Black people who are doing fairly well. I remember talking to (a Black millionaire) him, and he used to be very active (in the church). He once said "You know church is cool, but, you know, every Sunday, Pastor keeps talking about all these problems. 'If you got this problem, you got that problem'" Then he said, "Well, you know what? Let me be honest,

I don't have that many problems! Like, I'm wondering, should I, should I still go here? Should I be here? Because every Sunday, you're talking about these problems I don't have. My life's pretty good." It reminds me, obviously, about what you just said.

Pastor 4

So I've had to preach sermons like, how do I handle success? One sermon was how do you handle good news? What do you do with good news? Because we've always we've often, especially in our Black community, we've often turned the tide toward the negative, right? Steered the ship, the sermonic ship toward the negative, or the rhetoric toward the negative instead of toward the positive, but here, you know, aside from ailment, a sickness that is common to all humanity, we just don't have that en masse. Now I've got a very diverse congregation. So they match me. But what helped me and I'm sure, I know you've read if you dealing with this subject, McMickle's book, "Preaching to the Black Middle Class." So that helped me a bit when it first came out. And so I think those kinds of things, knowing that, you know, it's okay to have this kind of congregation. And, and, and being settled in that. Because I think for a minute, there was a little progress guilt? You know, when you just don't, when you don't have anything to complain about. And so I think, now that I've gotten accustomed to that, I want to make sure that the relevance of the sermonic moment, meets people on that other level.

Horace Hough

That's awesome. And you just fully stepped through and doubled-back around to my next two questions. I was going to first ask, as my follow up, what style, in your opinion, what style and content of preaching most attracts professionals? You've already talked a little bit about the content. What are your views on style, if it matters at all? Or if it's all kind of a toss up?

Pastor 4

I think that has been an ever-evolving experience. In preaching to Black professionals, I think that is ever evolving. My predecessor's preaching style is conversational. Never raises his voice, as in not ever. That is his way. He just talks. He gives you a great story, great narrative. He's going to click on an illustration at the end. And he's going to say, Amen. That is the entirety of his 30 to 40 to 45 minute presentation. And then (I become Pastor. And I'm not that guy who just talks to you like this and then says Amen. And when I got here, they had to get used to that. Because they had had years of conversational tone and an Amen. I raised my voice when I came as a guest, and it was a novelty. But when I came as one who is a part of the family, [they were] like "hmm, I don't know if we want to hear that again." And when they recognized that style does not have to eliminate substance, they became my friends. So the same people who wondered why was I so loud? [Are] now saying, why [are] you not preaching this week? I took us on that journey, simply to say, I think what matters most is authenticity, substance and a commitment to raising the level of qualitative sermonic presentation, or having a standard of qualitative sermonic presentation. So we'll always have the people who have their preferences, and that's just human nature. But I'm not so sure that style matters. Well,

then we go on another journey, let me go a little further than that. I believe in the 60s and the 70s, because we were, as a people, really trying to prove our sophistication, and position and trying to, to show ourselves-I'm talking about (church)-show ourselves to be people who had intellect, who did not need the emotion. I think (my predecessors) style flourished in that season, in that, in that circumstance of our historical life. I believe now we have made this praise culture in which we live, you know, that I can be all of that. I can be this excited, and cognitive individual, all at the same time. And part of what helps me with that is Dr. Wright's teaching on Africanism. And why Africanism is both cognitive and emotive and it's okay, that that makes us the whole of who we are. It's Biblical, of course, but I think, you know, we understand that we can express ourselves and enjoy ourselves and not just endure. That we aren't really caught up on "What is the style?" Is it raise your voice, or are you not gonna raise your voice? Is it expositional? Or is it narrative, doctrinal, or thematic? I think, in my experience, it is a function of trust. That you are authentically telling me what thus said the Lord.

Horace Hough

You mentioned language, is there certain language, images, or rituals, symbols that you think professionals are most attracted to? And I know that's a wide question, but feel free to pull from any of those language, images, rituals or symbols just within the church.

Pastor 4

Language-I think especially now it is there is a resurgence of the prophetic, specifically speaking truth to power. After these four years we've just endured. For those of us who were constantly in homeboy's face, on his case, I think many of our people appreciate that as long as we had a grasp on the reality of the situation, we were able to provide some kind of rational perspective on how wrong this person is and how different things should be. So I'm thinking, the language of confrontation is surging. There is this resurgence of confrontation, I think that whole confluence of events in 2020: COVID, George Floyd, Breanna Taylor, that, that whole ball of horror. Which helped us to want to confront again. And for many it was happening. But I think for the masses, even on a larger scale: I want to confront again. I want to get in the face of power again. Even if I am one with power. Remember we're talking about Black professionals who have power. So even if I have power, I still recognize that there's another piece of me, another part in my reality that says, don't try to out-white white folks, in the words of Dr. Jeremiah Wright. Let me get in here and confront these people.

Horace Hough

We had a few members who I thought would have, they were more passive early on. I've been at the church now about five or six years, I went from interim to permanent. And 2020 brought the fight back out of, you know, octogenarians, right? "When we gonna say something? What are we gonna do?" I was like, Well, okay! Before I got here, y'all had a preacher who preached a Mother's Day. I think it was not even their pastor, but it was somebody else. They came and preached at Mother's Day about being a Black mother or

something like that. And the story I heard was [much of the] church tightened up, and some people didn't like it. And now y'all out here telling me "we got to go for it."

Pastor 4

I have a camera guy-because we're in this age I have to record you know, these revival sermons that I would have been preaching in their church-and I have a camera man, there's just five or six of us in the sanctuary. And the camera man, whenever I go on one of those Trump tirades, he literally stops recording and starts clapping. And I said "you can't do that (laughter) the camera's pointing up in the ceiling. You can't do that sir." (laughter)

Horace Hough

Do you think that there are leadership or organizational models that attract or offend Black professionals? Leadership or organizational models that attract and/or offend?

Pastor 4

Yes, yes. The "I've been here forever" model and "I'm going to stay here in this position forever." The "you haven't made room for anybody younger than yourself" model [offends]. "I can do that too" model [attracts]. I'm capable. I have gifts and abilities and I would like to use them if this is my church too. We're intentionally intergenerational. So, it is our aim to always reach for every demographic. That's what we do, we utilize everything we got. Because we consider ourselves family, a village. It takes all the generations to fulfill that. But a few years ago, we recognized we don't have any young Deacons. And our church nominates and elects Deacons. So like, you know, there's all these young adults at our church. And all of the leadership, save the pastor and the associate pastor at that time, are these (elderly). This just doesn't make sense. And we say we believe in gender equality. But there are only five female Deacons, and they are all older. So, we were like, well, we need to make this a little more diverse. Because now we had people saying, "Wow, all of our Deacons are old. Primarily old men." And so now we've got like, this bunch of young adult Deacons, male and female, and the church breathed again. Because we were now allowing everybody to be represented, on every level of leadership. We've done it with the trustees. We got everything represented now. And our church is looking like there's life that we should be having with all these young adults around you. Yeah. So that's been good. So I think that the language of "let me serve. Let me do that. I've got the ability to do that"[attracts].

Horace Hough

Objectively, so I'm asking you to step outside of pastoring (church) at the moment, but just as a Black preacher, you look around the world, (redacted) you see what other churches are doing. You're tapped into how the non-churched or unchurched or de-churched world is seeing the church. What does the Black church need to do to create an environment where women will feel and know that they are respected equal to men. And feel free to take that however you take that, and answer however you like.

Pastor 4

So because the word of the preacher is so powerful, that word has to continually flow from the preacher's lips. And then we have to not just say it, we have to preach it. We have to not just preach and we have to teach it. [Although my predecessor was progressive and believed in gender equality] When we instituted women in the diaconate some years ago, that was a fight. Because, you know: "all I know is male Deacons, that's all I've ever known". "I'm Baptist" or, "I'm Black Baptist, we don't have...". That was the sentiment that was consistently being spoken. So I think, say it. Yes, say it, and then preach it, and then teach it, and then show it. So, (recently, for the month) I did the first Bible study on dismantling patriarchy, I thought I needed to do that. But the rest of the week were the sisters on our staff, preaching sisters on our staff are teaching-so one each week. And they're taking some of the sisters out of the Biblical text with the Savior, and they're teaching it. So all the big shout women preachers (guest), pardon the term Big shout, but (redacted list of names). And this year, we're gonna get intergenerational. And so the Deacons had a conversation about it in their meeting this month. And one of the female Deacons led the conversation, recapping the Bible studies and lessons and reminding-it was a strong word when she said this- she reminded the Deacons to be very careful that we don't participate passively in patriarchy. She said, "So when you address us in this meeting, you don't say 'Good evening brothers.' Because you've been so accustomed to that. We've had women in the diaconate for all these years. Because your patriarchy and your mentality only sees men in the diaconate, you forget that they're sitting right there. You can see it, you looking at them, and you still say 'Good evening brothers.'" So I think those conversations help us as well. I think the church has to ensure- the Black church has to ensure that we don't enslave our sisters anymore by relegating it. One of the sisters who taught Bible study said, "You can't just invite her to preach on Women's Day." She has to have the same kinds of opportunities as he has. The general, generic he and she. So I think all of us who understand that our God is not limited to a specific gender, or does not have a gender bias. That's a better way of saying it. I think we have to consistently say it, preach it, teach it and show it.

Horace Hough

To reach Black professionals-another objective question, what do you feel is absent from the Black church ministry? What needs to be addressed?

Pastor 4

So my quick thought was, networking opportunities. And I don't know why that was the first thought to my head. Opportunities where people get together as professional people and just hang out. It's not worship, not Bible study. Here's an opportunity to hang out. So one of my friends, I don't remember who it was, said-and people do it all throughout the Black church, at this point, probably white church too-he invites all the lawyers to a lunch. And he invites all of the schoolteachers to a lunch. And that is that. So they get to do that. But I think just opportunities that do not point us to ministry moments. That sounds so strange that a Christian preacher said, Let's get together and not have church. But yes, let's get together and not have church. Let's just chill, let's just relax and have fun

and network. So that for the purposes, and I've been using this phrase a whole lot lately, of building wealth. A version of building wealth in and through our communities. So I'm thinking that we have to be more comfortable talking about money in church without asking for money.

Horace Hough

Yeah.

Pastor 4

Just talking about it from the standpoint of wealth creation, and recognizing that this is a pivotal time in our history, where so many Black professionals are making the kinds of salaries that they're making, earning the kinds of resources or dollars that they're earning. And we're spending it all. (Redacted) did a series last month, I guess we were doing a Black History series. He's talking about we're wearing everyone else's names. And he went down the roll of all the designers and said you're making all of their families wealthy while your family is not becoming wealthy, because we're wearing everybody else's name. And we're not creating the name for ourselves. And so I would think that some of that networking and wealth creation conversation, but I would think just opportunities to do it even better. So opportunities for us to ensure generational wealth and talking about it in such a way that if the Bible does tell us that a good person leaves an inheritance for their children's children, that we'd kind of figure out how to do that. We may be doing all right for children, some of us, you know, we'll leave our children something, but have we gotten to grandchildren yet? I think they are families who are [now] understanding the need for that. And if we can network around how to build and begin to trust each other, to work and build, build wealth, I think it would help us a whole lot to reimagine who we are, and what we're able to do with the kind of power that we have, but I don't know that we always display.

Horace Hough

Thank you for that. So I have a final question. And then we can wrap which is, again, open ended. I'm asking for, honestly, suggestions as I move ahead with the project. Do you have any suggestions, you think that would benefit me? As I move ahead to attract develop relationships with and involve Black professionals?

Pastor 4

Would you consider yourself a Black professional?

Horace Hough

Yes. Let me be clear on that. I'm an educator. And I was, you know, educators sometimes toe the line, depending upon what level of education you're in. But yes, I do consider myself a Black professional.

Pastor 4

And based on what you said, I thought the same. Without getting all in your business, and just based upon your history with education, I thought the same thing. I would think of ensuring that the passions that you have are consistently-well, that you don't leave anything on the field. That you utilize all that brainpower, and experience, and exposure to provide options, opportunities for your Black professional counterparts. There's so much in us that sometimes gets undeveloped or stays underdeveloped. And we don't give it all. The "I know I'm supposed to be doing some other stuff and I haven't done it, because I'm so busy doing this stuff." But I believe that God has given us the capacity to do all this stuff. And do it well, do it with excellence. So that we can show to others who do not have the same kind of energy or example, or the same kind of influences or influencers, our possibility. So my biggest concern is what do we do with the people coming behind us? You started this project, you told me when you started talking to me, you told me the project was about 35 to 50 year olds. So what am I thinking to do as a 35 to 50 year old person who is a Black professional, what example am I leaving for those who are 18 to 34? Am I using all that I have, all that I've been given, all my capacity to show to somebody who is watching me that you can do all of this. That you can do this. So what have I proven to that 23 year old, who's working on a master's degree, to make that person think that after this master's degree, because I'm in this line of work, I need to get a doctorate too, and I can do that. And be successful. And I'm not just one, I'm not just unifocused, I've got various spheres of influence that I can maintain. I want to be focused, but I also want to make sure that I don't hear God saying "Servant, pretty well done. I gave you more options. I gave you more opportunities. I gave you more to do. And you did pretty well, but you didn't do as well as you should have." And I think Black professionals can be accused, maybe, of wanting to be so upwardly mobile in that one lane that we forget. Maybe there's a book in you. Maybe there's a business needing to be created. Maybe there's a nonprofit you need to create. Maybe you should be in a disadvantaged community talking to somebody. I don't ever want us to not do all that we can, with the capacities we've been given. Because somebody is watching us, and I want them to see a good example of a person who is a well balanced being. I play, I play real hard. I enjoy my play. But I also work so doggone hard that you're like "how do you get all that into one day?"

Horace Hough

Yeah, no, that's, that's good. I think you gave me a lot to chew on. Not just for the project but even me personally with that one, so I appreciate it.

Interview 5:

Horace Hough

So looking at your previous experience in pastoring, and even where you are now, during the pandemic, this is a simple question, but it might take some time to get to. What have been, or are, the most important issues and concerns for your Black professionals? And have they changed over the years? Now you have a wide span of that. So I guess to make it a little simpler, where you are now at (church), what have been, or are, the most important issues for Black professionals? You can answer that however you feel this is a very casual, more ethnographic comment.

Pastor 5

That's a great question. It really is. Relationships-building relationships laterally, with other people, obviously. And then there's the obvious answer building relationship with Christ. But the addendum to that is, how can I serve? That becomes a continual question, or progression. How can I serve? And because (church) is so Afrocentric, when people show up, the question, "What can I do for my people?" you know, that becomes the question. I want to be Christian, I'm Black, you know, so that becomes the preeminent question. "How can I make an impact?" There's one class or group/class people who don't want to do what they do nine to five, but want to serve. And then there's another group that says, "Look, I want to give of my, you know, my time-use the skills that I have. And I want to share that with someone." And I'll give you a prime example our (redacted) program, primarily, you have Black professionals that work with that program. They absolutely love being able to share information, their experiences with younger people, and they track them, male and female. So there's a male side, and there's this female side. And, and one of the biggest things that, you know, one gentleman loves to do, he loves to do "dress for success". I mean, he does this whole thing. He's a real dapper guy anyway. But I mean, he does this whole thing, from belt, to shoes, to socks, to bow ties and ties. I mean, the whole thing, then does a thing about, what is after five wear, I mean, he goes, and this isn't just him talking. I mean, he's got charts. He loves it. He absolutely loves doing it, and will not miss an opportunity to be able to share and actually he's very good, because the young people really enjoy it, because he's so engaging. You know, this isn't like some, you know, boring person. And I mean, he's funny. And he's a hip hop head on top of it. So he's infusing music as he talks the entire time. So it's like, "on my job. I could never talk about hip hop...", you know, he has this real "corporate" job. He said, "...but I can talk about hip hop, and about clothes, and I can talk about how this engages, you know, puts you in a position for opportunities." So it's a relationship. It is also, how can I live out, how can I serve? Relationships/service. Relationships/service become the two key factors.

Horace Hough

Awesome, thank you. Have you noticed that that's been a change over the years? And I know we're talking about different ministerial context, different states, cities, but have

you noticed that specifically that age bracket and that socio economic class have had different interests, or is that held pretty steady?

Pastor 5

Well, the principles: relationship, service, is steady, that principle is consistent. Interests shift. So now we're moving into a piece about, this year's theme is, like (redacted). So after we have our conversation, I've got to talk with a group of professionals, interesting enough, who are putting together an entire financial literacy, entrepreneur program, philanthropic program for our church, from youth to seniors, And they're ridiculously excited. This is what they do. You know, there's a guy, he works in commodities. And he just wants to build something about how do you build, as we've been talking about, conscious wealth? You know, it's one thing for someone to have, wealth. I just love the way Chris Rock says, "If Shaq is rich, the guy who signs Shaq's check is wealthy." And he says, you know, how do we get to the conscious piece of not just having stuff, but the biblical piece that wealth is more than money, it's your character, it's your relationship, it is what you choose to do that makes you wealthy, and how you choose to interact, that makes you wealthy. So he's super excited about the idea of building a whole new group of legacies, philanthropic, young people who will choose to take, you know, they'll make \$10 million, and they're going to give it to (an HBCU). And (HBCU) is not going to have to, you know, beg X Corporation, but there'll be a group of Black philanthropic individuals who say, "Hey, this is what we do, we do philanthropy." And so that has shifted. And the artistic aspect has shifted. So now, with this new group of artist activists, there's then: but who's behind that? So who is going to be your manager? Who's going to be your lawyer? And so we're looking at kind of doing this whole, you know, Black days kind of feast. You know, Black Monday, Black Tuesday, supporting Afro-American businesses. But how do you create an ecosystem of supporting not only our own, but building the consciousness, relationships and people who are conscious of their community and conscious about Christ? There's excitement around that. There's a real excitement.

Horace Hough

I can imagine. So then my follow up question is, have you ever put an intentional, or do you put an intentional effort into reaching Black professionals?

Pastor 5

Um, no, I haven't actually. Because interesting enough, you end up attracting. So (church) is very, super diverse. You know, "that church has x, y, & z people," but then you show up and you're like, "oh, gosh, it's ridiculously diverse." So we have, you know, someone who can, like, for example, there's a member who has the contract, who builds the engines for the (redacted) trucks. And he just sold his business, he's a brother. And his thing is now he's part of this whole group (redacted). He said, "All I want to do is I want to train young people to do what I did. That's all I want to do. I want them to have this

kind of business and have this kind of opportunity." He said, basically "I'm too old to be fighting white people. I'm just tired of it." He said, "I want to train a whole 'nother group." So he was attracted, because he was looking for a space that merged, I want to be Black, and I want to be Christian. I don't want to have to-already in my job, I got to always tuck my Blackness in my pocket. I want to, I want a free Black space. And so it ends up attracting, you know, a particular community of people. So we end up if it's a Black professional, it's the professional who has no problem sharing their culture or wants to be able to express that. Who's concerned about their community in a unique way, who will give to Black Lives Matter, but their company, the law firm they work for, can't know about it. But if they need something, this is who they need to, you know, know. They will get the folks out of jail, but they may not be able to do it themselves, because they're not yet a full partner. So we have a really interesting, this activist minded, Black professional, who shows up because they want to be partnered with those who are activists and those who are, you know, connected on the ground, along with having a church that is diverse. So reentry is a big, big thing for us. So, you know, we have folks who are part of our congregation, because they know that that's what we do.

Horace Hough

What makes serving professionals different than serving the other demographics in your church? I know you already mentioned the relationships, right, especially laterally. But is there anything else that you notice specifically [people] in that age bracket, in that socioeconomic class, are really attracted to maybe more than other demographics?

Pastor 5

They appreciate the challenge of organization. So I'll give you a prime example. You know, we, during the pandemic, everybody had to go virtual. And, you know, our virtual broadcast has progressively changed. You know, we think that we've made some significant improvements in terms of how we broadcast from, you know, the general church, here's the camera, there's the preacher, there's a big empty church shot, too. How do we become more cinematic? How do we create a broadcast that is specific to our demographic. Professionals really, really appreciate some of the details. Which is very fascinating. They appreciate the cinematography, the editing, they appreciated the fact that we have credits that roll at the end of the broadcast.

Horace Hough

I noticed that the other week, I was like, they're doing credits now?!? I was like, I gotta up my game.

Pastor 5

But it said to them-they're in an industry that works with teams.

Horace Hough

Right.

Pastor 5

And they appreciated the fact that we were highlighting the team. That this is a team that makes this happen. You know, it's not the pastor, it's not, you know, and a camera man or something of that nature. There's a team of people who are doing all kinds of stuff that you never see. And so, there's something about that, that seemed to connect in a unique way.

Site Team Representative

And it also lends itself to, "oh, my church is a little elevated more than just having to stand there with an iPhone, a mic, and the pulpit. You know what I mean? It gives you a certain pride when you see the slickness of the production going on with it. I'm in performing arts, so I appreciate it.

Pastor 5

Okay, you get it. Well, let me say this, there's something about Black folk in general, but Black middle class, and I found this out at (redacted): The Black middle class likes to brag. Just, I mean, they want to brag on their church, they want to brag on their sorority, they want to brag on their fraternity, they want to brag on their family, you know, that there's-parents naturally do that. And so, you know, in (redacted), there was always, when I got there, a couple of people anyway, but would say things like "We're the leading church," and I was like, is it a race? Like, what? Are y'all running? What is this, 400 meters? You know, it's like, what are we leading? But what he was really saying is, there's a story we'd like to be able to share. And the story was, this church was the home of the (redacted). The offices operated out of this church. This church was the home of (redacted). The offices operated out of this church. This church, it was an interesting story about (redacted), and this whole idea of Black professionals. The, what used to be the (redacted) office was the office of a gentleman by the name of (redacted). He was the best heart surgeon in the area in the in the 50s, and 60s, but he was not allowed because he was Black, to have an office at the Medical College (redacted). So he had to put his office at the church. And I love telling the story, it's a great story. So he was really good and specifically, some white folks, because they were so racist, they were just like, "I don't want the Black guy putting his hands in me," you know, but he was the best one. So what they would have to do, he would have to dress sometimes as a janitor. Once they put the patient asleep, he'd then put on the necessary outfit and perform the surgery. Then after he finished the surgery, he finished, he put back on the other outfit, and these whites folks walking around, didn't know this Black man saved their lives.

Horace Hough

Wow. Wow.

Pastor 5

But there's one really good story around it: that there was a real racist white guy, like I don't want that, you know, didn't use his name, used the N word, whatever. And then they were like "don't worry, you know, we're Medical College (redacted)." He's like, "I don't want them nigras, performing, putting their hands in me." And so (redacted) did the surgery. It was an emergency surgery from what I understand. He was still living while I was there. He told the story. He was almost 90 while I was still there. And the story is, is that as they wheeled out this racist, redneck white man, one of the nurses said, she did it on purpose, from my understanding, "Aren't you glad (redacted) put his hands on you?" And they said the man almost had another heart attack when he realized. But [those were] the stories that they want to be able to share. You know, here is a medical doctor, who was a part of the church, the church gave him an office. This is the story of the merging of our faith, and our professional career.

Horace Hough

I'm gonna flip this question: let me veer from my script a little bit. Do you feel that the ecological impact of a church, what they do in a community, attracts professionals more than or less than or the same as the other demographics?

Pastor 5

You know, that's a-I've never had anyone ask me that question. And it is an attracting factor. I'm not sure if it is more or less. But you do hear people say "because of this, you know, I'm engaged," but primarily, it always goes back to relationships too. Because they're introduced to the program through a relationship. You know, when a professional invites another professional, it's not you know, "come and hear my pastor and we got a great choir." It's like, you know, you'll, they will share a circle about their church: we do this, this, this and this, AND we've got a killer choir, you know, AND you'll like my pastor, you know. So usually it's a circle that is usually shared, meaning that they want to be able to share a fuller meal for someone who they are assuming probably has encountered a variety of institutions. They're making that assumption. I'm just thinking that the professional group that you're talking about usually invites a younger professional group. And then they always, you know, make these particular statements, that we got this going on, this going on, so on and so on. And, let me put this way, one young person who was invited by another older person, he said, "This is the (redacted) church, y'all (redacted). This is what I was looking for!" you know? There's an intentionality in terms of how people share.

Horace Hough

Are there leadership or organizational models that you feel offend Black professionals? And then are there ones that you think attract them?

Pastor 5

I think an anti-intellectual model does. When you start denigrating someone's-it's one thing to critique being bourgeois, it's another thing to critique Black institutions. That's two different things. So there's an ideology of "I am better". And then there's an

institution that is designed for us to survive and thrive. Two different things. So when someone makes critique of bourgeois culture, you know, people get a laugh, chuckle "hey, you right." You know, we try and act like [we're better] and so on and so on. But if you start attacking HBCUs, people are going to leave the pews.

Horace Hough

Yeah, yeah.

Pastor 5

Now, it's one thing to say, you know, we got to do better, we want to support, but it's another thing to say you don't need such and such. And that is offensive. And I have, you know, more from a distance, seen ministries attack Black institutions from the pulpit. And it doesn't sit well. So you got a student there, let's say, you know, the pastor didn't, didn't go to any institution at all. But then you got a student that you raised money for to go to, you know, to North Carolina A & T. And it just, it doesn't sit well with the family nor with the students. You raised money for me, but at the same time, you are saying that there's something wrong with what I'm doing. It's this cognitive dissonance that happens so that, that does offend, I think that does offend. Attacking Black institutions.

Site Team Representative

Do you feel that this demographic picks up more on those cognitive dissonances that, you know, like, I mean, I know that the class and the demographic that Horace is speaking to, is by and large, more educated, but even those who haven't attended higher learning institutions, do you feel that they pick up on that cognitive dissonance and go "wait a minute, what's going on here?"

Pastor 5

I think it is picked up on very quickly. It's one thing for someone you know, if someone was like, "Well, I went to (HBCU X) you went to (HBCU Y)" that's natural rivalry. We get it. We get a tickle, you know, we laugh about that. But someone throws shade at (HBCU X) then all of a sudden your (HBCU Y) folk are like "no no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no-don't go there." Now you're dealing-you start talking family. You're attacking my family.

Site Team Representative

They recognize the family dynamic.

Horace Hough

When it comes down to it, though, it's that issue of yeah, we can we, you know, we can do this, right, we can do this. We can take jabs, that's what we do. But when somebody who's not part of it decides that they want to lambaste, you know, or become judgmental.

That's when it's like, hey, whoa, whoa, this is too significant. Right, right. It's too important, culturally is too important. From a legacy standpoint.

Pastor 5

When it moves from, you know, fun dozens to an insult, you know, that's two different things, right. Completely two different things.

Horace Hough

So I'm going to just pick one of these questions. We, there's no way I could sit here and talk about Black professionals and not address Black women. Right? There's no way to talk about church and not address Black women. There's no way I could talk about Black professionals in the church, and not talk about Black women. What do you feel the Black church needs to start working on or needs to do, to create an environment where women feel and know that they are respected equally to men. And it's open ended.

Pastor 5

Yes. One, we have to completely decimate, remove white evangelical theology from our lips, and our heart. Two, we have to integrate a womanist theological framework. Three, we have to deconstruct the leadership model that we have completely. Meaning that women have to be not "able to serve" but to serve in every aspect of church life. Four, we've got to be better biblical and theological scholars. You know, we got guys running around talking about "well, they can't preach"-that's the most foolish thing, you know. And when I was ordained, I was ordained with five other people, three of them were women, and at (redacted). And there was-he brought in an elder minister from (redacted), I can't think of the gentleman's name, but he said the most profound thing as he was talking, he said, "You need to hear this from a man as I say this to you. I'm speaking to the sisters." He says, "because they're going to be men who are going to say that you cannot get into the pulpit, who are going to marginalize you." He said, "Remember, Mary carried the word before man could preach the Word. So if God will trust a woman to carry it for nine months..." And by that time, everybody was shouting in the room, you know. But he was saying that we've got to do some more depth. The other piece is in reference to this idea of Deacons/Deaconess. Deaconess does not occur biblically, it's a made up term out of our very gender centric notions of place. If Paul can use and say, Phoebe, you are my Deacon, that's that. She was the Deacon. I mean, that was the term that was used. She wasn't called Deaconess. The majority of our doctrine comes from the book of Romans that was delivered and preached by a woman by the name of Phoebe. So, our theological underpinnings are problematic. And those underpinnings of-not all of it, but a good portion of it-is because we idolize white evangelical theology. And what's interesting, if you look, probably prior to about 1834. In the 1700s, you would have Black churches and small areas, where women, we now have more research that women were serving in areas that we now said they can't serve. It was when we came in contact with, (redacted) they said that, no, this is the way that women have to serve. Well, the elder woman who was considered the Queen Mother was the one who decided who was going to be the preacher. And if she said, no, it was over. She was the most powerful

person in the church. Communion was served, you know, outside and guess who was serving it.

Horace Hough

I'm doing this project on attracting and developing relationship and involving Black American professionals, between ages of 35 and 50 years old. Suggestions? Do you have any suggestions for me? Specifically, implementing any ideas or actions? Research I'm always up for. I have my fill at the moment, but um, I'm always looking to keep learning because I'm going to have to keep learning after this project is done. So I'm always open for books, videos, any kind of resources. So I'm open for that. But my question specifically gears toward any kind of actions to implement, things to consider, leadership models, things of that nature.

Pastor 5

Have you looked at Masonic leadership models?

Horace Hough

I've not.

Pastor 5

And the reason that I mentioned that is because the Masonic model is one of the Black social network models that does not require a college degree, does not require you to be it. Prince Hall was doing in many ways what the church was doing-the early Black church was doing. Meaning that you have the person who is the laborer next to the person who owns the field, but the person who's the laborer, maybe 32nd degree and the person who owned the field is a third-degree Mason. And so that's just my point in terms of how they attracted a very strong professional class along with people who were working class, both/and. Both/And. And I learned that, you know, I'm not a Mason, but (redacted) is. We had a chair of the Deacons ministry who was a veteran. We had several, you know, and they would speak about that they would talk about everything, well stuff they could tell you, but they will talk about they were very proud of the diversity, class diversity, that this is the only place where the PhD, is under the guy who has no D, but the guy who has no D actually knows more than the dude with the PhD.

Horace Hough

Right.

Pastor 5

So they were very fascinated by that. So it became a space and it's more, you know, a gendered space, but, you know, it became a space for Black men to develop. And then when those who rose up in the ranks, who were Black professionals, it became an opportunity for them to use that particular model in building mutual aid societies, and

other things ended up benefiting, you know, a larger community. And so that may be-I just thought about it since you were thinking about Black professionals

Horace Hough

Oh, thank you. Well, I'll definitely look into that. I appreciate it. (redacted), I thank you so much for your time.

APPENDIX F: DATA FROM ONE-ON-ONE VIDEOS AND WORKSHOPS

One-on-One Videos

Ten, approximately three-minute, videos were released one week at a time beginning on May 31, 2021. Thematically, all videos were curtailed to encourage Black Christian professionals in their personal and work lives. Each video was posted as “unlisted” on YouTube, and therefore could only be seen by using a specific link. These links were sent to a selected group of fifteen professionals who were instructed to send the links to other professionals they thought could benefit from them. This method was utilized to prevent contaminating my data with viewership from people that were not my target demographic. Each video description reads, Spiritual Encouragement for Black Christian professionals, especially those between 35 and 50 years old. Each week and their topics are listed below:

Week one: “Spoons and Forks”. This focused on being content with our unique gifts.

Week two: “But the Grass”. This focused on being flexible with changes times and circumstances.

Week three: “You Can Do It in the Mix”: This focused on mixing faith into our decisions and experiences. This was inspired by “Get the Mix Right” in The Word for You Today devotional (3/27/17)

Week four: “You Had One Job”: This focused on making sure that we are doing what we are made to do.

Week five: “Detangling”: This focused on working to separate who life has transformed us into from who we should be.

Week six: “Repotting”: This focused on allowing God to lead us into our new stages in life.

Week seven: “Playing Chords”: This focused on embracing that life has equipped us with various talents, skills, and experiences. With that combination, we are uniquely equipped to navigate different circles and impact different people.

Week eight: “Playing Notes”: This focused on recognizing that although we are comprised of various talents and skills, it can be effective to utilize one over the other to reach certain people or accomplish certain goals.

Week nine: “Fear and Faith”: This focused on fighting fear of personal and spiritual growth.

Week ten: “You Can Do It in the Mix”: This focused on understanding that although there are some things we can do as if we were younger, the lives we live may determine that we should not. Just because we can, does not mean that we should.

Viewership (V) over ten weeks:

**Data from week three was lost.*

	V.1	V.2	V.3	V.4	V.5	V.6	V.7	V.8	V.9	V.10
Wk 2	31									
Wk 3										
Wk 4	58	61	16							
Wk 5	69	71	29	32						
Wk 6	71	73	30	40	25					
Wk 7	71	74	33	46	29	23				
Wk 8	71	74	33	47	31	30	14			
Wk 9	72	74	33	47	31	31	15	23		
Wk 10	72	75	33	48	31	31	15	27	11	
Wk 11	72	75	33	48	31	31	15	30	15	15
12/8/21	76	76	35	50	31	32	16	31	17	19

Comments from some video recipients are as follows:

Recipient One - Personal perspective “fear and faith” along with “just because you can doesn’t mean you should” was applicable personally as well as professionally for myself. I actually shared on screen share during Teams meeting as I find watching facial expressions as well as hearing from one person’s digestion of the topic vs another was quite interesting.

Fear and Faith - From a career perspective I suffer from impostor syndrome more so because I am ALWAYS the only Black executive present in the IT space for my organization as well as client events. Despite knowing that I am an extremely strong leader paying attention to those around me and the sense of not belonging creeps in. Having faith in the talents and opportunities that the Lord has placed in my presence has allowed me to step out past that fear and your message was very practical in how to shift that thought process to be more impactful and confident by focusing more on my faith rather than my fear. So thank you !! This really helped me.

Even on personal level I am extremely guarded and transitioning to adapt. This mindset has helped me immensely and to just breathe a bit more without leading with fear.

In regards to “although you can doesn’t mean you should,” it was a powerful reinforcement as for me it meant it’s ok to walk away from things that are not good for you which means both “people” and “activity”.

Thank you ! While all of the sessions were great 9 and 1.0 was like a personal therapy session.

Professional Network:

Feedback from close female friends

1.This is refreshing when pastors are applying common sense / practical application of the obstacles in life.

2.Short and sweet messaging

3.Please share service times :)

4.this spoke to me. I have been trying to remove toxic people from my life and listening to this gives me thinking power to approach.

Recipient Two – I subscribed by the videos don’t come up so I can’t like them. Both were dope!

Recipient 3 – Great message!

Recipient 4 – These were awesome Hough! He should consider crossing marketing on IGTV

Recipient 5 – I love these! They are really great!

Recipient 6 – These are really good! Keep ‘em coming!

Recipient 7 – Needed this one today

Recipient 8 – I think the message is concise, the anecdotes were fitting. I enjoyed it! It left me wanting more, which isn’t bad.

Recipient 9 – Good stuff Fam! Thank you.

Recipient 10 – Right on time!

Recipient 11 – Love this! So very true

Data and Comments from Workshops

The duration of each workshop was between one hour and one hour and thirty minutes. Although each public workshop required registration, no one workshop had full attendance.

Interview Workshop (conducted with Shad Hargrove, general manager for Curate, on August 5, 2021) – After one week of advertising specifically to professionals, the virtual workshop had an attendance of four, including myself. The question-and-answer period was extensive, and the dialogue was healthy. Due to the personal nature of the topics queried, much of the workshop recording had to be edited before being provided for those who missed it. The video of the workshop was privately posted to the First Baptist YouTube page for future reference for our membership. As of December 8, 2021, it has twelve views and one like.

https://youtu.be/AfAd_WljIY0

A Conversation about Emotional Well-being for Black Christian Professional Women (conducted with Dr. Sandra Hardy, Psy.D., MFT, on September 19, 2021) – After one week of advertising to the Church, visitors, and directly to Black Christian professional women, the virtual workshop had an attendance of fourteen. This was conducted as a conversation and according to the comments below allowed for substantive dialogue. The video of the workshop was posted publicly on the church's YouTube channel and as of December 8, 2021, it has twenty-seven views and two likes.

<https://youtu.be/hbmmyvnBpKs>

Comments about the workshop:

What did you think about Dr. Hardy, her insight, and presentation?

- Very Spiritual, insightful, and informative. I got great value.
- Excellent presenter with strong spirit-based comments
- I felt that her presentation was great. She gave poignant advice on matters I feel a lot of us were looking for insight on and said things we needed to hear.
- DOWN TO EARTH, DISCUSSION/ANSWERS WERE RELEVANT TO EVERYDAY LIFE
- I thought she provide solid insight on how to address some of the situations that were shared in addition to validating feelings that were expressed.
- Dr. Hardy did an amazing job

What did you find beneficial?

- Reminding me that the Christ in me is first. She quoted my favorite scripture Matthew 6:33. The discussion was informative, and had me look for Wisdom, Courage, and that Wisdom is our friend. Self-Care is knowing who and whose you are. We can't serve God depleted.

- Dr Hardy resources and ability to guide in a caring way
- Her demeanor and tone created an atmosphere conducive to sharing; She made it easy to ask questions and gave us a safe space to communicate.
- DISCUSSION WAS RELEVANT TO EACH OF US; EVERYONE SEEMED TO BE ON A LEVEL FIELD
- How she validated feelings that were shared was refreshing, reminding people that they are not alone in their thoughts and approaches.
- Connections to faith using real world issues.

Were there any things that were problematic or could use some work?

- The set up to the session could be shorter, she opened by speaking for almost 20-25 minutes, and people were eager to get into the discussion.

We are looking to do more sessions. Do you have any suggestions?

- 1.Servant Leader Burnout. 2.Dealing with hurt even Church hurt. 3.Dealing with Toxic atmospheres and relationships. 4.Creating the utmost Space for God, study, worship, devotion, prayer and meditation. 5.Mind, Body and Spiritual Wholeness what does that mean?6 Wholeness for Singles. 7.Partnership in Marriage Ministry.
- Ways to support & encourage young Black professionals in corporate America
- I was actually asked if Dr. Hardy had any plans to come to the east coast and do an in-person retreat, because people enjoyed the zoom and wished there was a way to extend the conversation into a weekend of discovery.
- CONTINUE CONVERSATION FOR UPDATES AS TO HOW THE FIRST DISCUSSION MAY HAVE BEEN APPLIED TO THEIR EVERYDAY LIFE
- Addressing the set up as noted above in addition to having some more pointed questions to guide the conversation.
- Definitely consider a women's retreat with her.

Critical commentary was as follows:

I felt at times that she answered by reiterating the question we asked and didn't necessarily give tools/coping mechanisms.

I invited a senior female leader at my company to this event. She did enjoy it but also shared some of the same sentiment in terms of regurgitating the problem presented with an obvious response. For example: Don't do that anymore. I was like hello... if it were that easy I wouldn't ask :) .

Roundtable with Young Black Man (conducted on September 27, 2021) – This was a closed virtual workshop consisting of a twenty-three-year-old Black man and three thirty-five to fifty-year-old Black men. The purpose was to allow the younger man to inquire about things he felt he need guidance with. Using my years of working in mentoring, the theory behind using three men instead of one was to remove the awkwardness that can sometimes be present to two adult men are speaking about personal issues for the first time. The conversation leaned heavily toward creating credit and purchasing a vehicle. All participants shared that they were pleased with the conversation.

A Conversation About E-Membership (conducted with Anthony Cobb and Jenna Hatton-Cobb, mega-church e-ministry leaders, on September 30, 2021) – This was a public workshop whose nineteen attendees consisted mainly of pastors and ministry leaders. Following the workshop, many requests were made to gain access to the video. Due to technological issues, the video was not uploaded until December 12, 2021. As of January 25, 2022, it has thirty-five views and one like.

<https://youtu.be/c6smE6Hkru8>

APPENDIX G: FIRST BAPTIST 2015 SELF STUDY

First Baptist Church, Milford Connecticut – Rev. Horace A. Hough, Interim Pastor July 2015 Congregational Self Study

Tasks of the Church					
These are tasks that a local church is likely to perform. Please respond how you feel our church is doing in these areas.					
		Needs more emphasis	Very Satisfied	Generally Satisfied	Receives Too Much Emphasis
1.	Offering worship that provides a meaningful experience of God and the Christian tradition	17	22	13	
2.	Providing worship that expresses the Gospel in contemporary language and forms	9	26	15	2
3.	Providing Christian education for children and youth	17	18	15	
4.	Providing Christian education programs for adults	15	21	17	
5.	Helping members deepen their personal, spiritual relationship with God	24	13	16	
6.	Sharing the good news of the Gospel with the unchurched	30	9	14	
7.	Engaging in acts of charity and service to persons in need	12	17	23	
8.	Encouraging members to act on the relationship of the Christian faith to social, political and economic issues	25	11	13	2
9.	Providing a caring ministry for the sick, shut-ins and the bereaved.	29	6	18	
10.	Providing pastoral counseling to help members deal with personal problems	23	9	21	
11.	Providing fellowship opportunities for members.	22	17	22	1
12.	Helping members understand their use of money, time and talents as expressions of Christian Stewardship	29	9	14	
13.	Supporting international missionary outreach	19	10	22	3
14.	Helping members discover their own gifts for ministry and service.	28	6	19	

15.	Participating in activities and programs with other local religious groups.	29	9	14	
16.	Expressing our denominational heritage/tradition	23	13	18	
Tasks of the Pastor					
		Very High Priority	High Priority	Moderate Priority	Low Priority
1.	Providing administrative leadership for the congregation's ministry.	31	14	7	1
2.	Actively and visibly supporting the church's stewardship program.	31	16	6	
3.	Directly involving laity in the planning and leadership of church programs and events.	18	22	11	1
4.	Planning and leading a program of new member recruitment.	18	24	11	
5.	Participating in local community activities, issues and problems.	9	21	22	2
6.	Relate biblical teaching to contemporary social justice issues	18	19	10	4
7.	Planning and leading worship sensitive to the needs of the congregation.	29	17	6	
8.	Emphasizing the spiritual development of members.	33	15	5	
9.	Visiting the sick, shut-in and bereaved.	33	16	3	
10.	Visiting members at their homes and/or other social settings outside the church.	11	11	23	5
11.	Pastoral counseling of members having person, family and/or work related problems.	29	18	6	
12.	Developing and supporting religious education programs for children and youth.	35	15	2	1
13.	Developing and leading adult education programs.	24	20	8	

14.	Supporting the world mission of the church.	15	18	16	7
15.	Participating in denominational activities beyond the local church, that is, at the regional or national level.	7	21	21	2
16.	Preparing and preaching inspiring sermons.	38	6	3	
STYLE OF MINISTRY					
Listed below are pairs of characteristics of a good pastor including and beyond Sunday morning worship service. You may agree that both traits in the pair are desirable. But, if you had to choose which characteristic of the two would you prefer in our pastor. (Please check either a or b.)					
1a.	Expertise in biblical and theological matters	18			
or					
1b.	Strong emphasis on spiritual development	27			
2a.	Thought provoking and challenging	33			
or					
2b.	Comforting and Reassuring	18			
3a.	Usually emphasizes the Bible	40			
or					
3b.	Focuses on contemporary issues	8			
4a.	Welcomes new approaches and ideas	37			
or					
4b.	Prefers doing things the way they have always been done	15			
5a.	Has a relaxed interpersonal style	46			
or					
5b.	A formal interpersonal style	4			
6a.	Tends to be strong and decisive force in decisions	27			
or					
6b.	Promotes congregational and lay leadership decision making	26			
7a.	Achieves set goals regardless of costs	8			
or					
7b.	Prioritizes costs in setting goals	42			
8a.	Helps people figure things out for themselves	39			
or					
8b.	Advises people what to do	10			

9a.	Is reserved and reflective	11			
or					
9b.	Outgoing and socially engaging	43			
Our Identity and Our Story – Who We Are (Circle Answers)					
1.	Gender	Male	Female		
		18	31		
2.	Adult Age	Under 20	20-24	25-34	35-44
		0	0	0	5
		45-54	55-64	65-74	75 or over
		7	18	10	9
3.	If you have children living at home, how many are in each age group? (One answer per household)	Age 0-5	Age 6-12	Age 13-18	Age 19 & over
		2	2	5	3
4.	Racial/Ethnic Background	African American	Caribbean American	Native American	White
		43	4	0	2
		Hispanic	Mixed	Asian	Pacific Islander
			1		
5.	Marital Status	Single, never married	Married	Widowed	Separated or Divorced
		9	32	7	4
		Living in a committed relationship			0
6.	Which describes your household? (One answer per household)	One person living alone	10	One couple without children	18
		One adult with child/children	1	Two or more adults with child/children	7
		Several adults living in the same household			8
7.	Highest Level of Formal Education	Less than high school graduate	1	High School graduate	6
		Some college, trade or vocational school	10	College degree	7
		Post graduate work or degree	23		

8.	Member – Current Status (One answer per household)	One person living alone	11	A couple with child/children	9
		One adult with child/children	2	More than two adults without child/children	5
		A couple without children	10	More than two adults with child/children	3
9.	Employment Status	Retired	24	Not currently employed	2
		Employed full time	25	Full time "houseperson"	1
		Employed part time	2	Full time student	0
10.	Occupation - currently employed, presently job-hunting or retired from this field (Circle one category)				
	Service worker: police, firefighter, barber, custodian, beautician, food service, usher, etc.	4	Clerical worker: bookkeeper, secretary, postal worker, receptionist, data entry specialist	3	
	Government: state, local, armed forces	2	Operative or Laborer: worker in construction, manufacturing, etc.	3	
	Tradesperson: carpenter, mason, plumber, electrician, machinist	3	Sales: business owner, insurance or real estate agent, broker, telemarketing, salesperson, etc.	1	
	Financial: banker, credit officer, financial planner, buyer, philanthropy, etc.	3	Technical: IT, engineer, computer programmer, architect, artist, etc.	2	

Professional: educator, accountant, social worker, attorney, physician, other healthcare, etc.	20	Self- employed/Independent Business owner	2
Transportation	1	Other: Auditor	1
11.	Income Range (Circle One)		
	Under \$25,000	2	
	\$25,000 - \$49,999	9	
	\$50,000 - \$74,999	7	
	\$75,000 - \$99,999	8	
	\$100,000 - \$149,999	5	
	\$150,000 or more	5	
12.	How many years have you lived in the general area?	One year or less	0
		2-4 years	0
		5-9 years	1
		10-15 yrs.	1
		16-19 yrs.	1
		20-25 yrs.	10
		26 or more	31
13.	How likely is it that you will move in the next few years?	Definitely will move	3
		Might move-50/50	8
		Probably will move	2
		Very unlikely to move	17
		Probably will not move	16
14a.	Why did you join First Baptist?	(checkmark as applies)	14b. What keeps you here?
	17	The Pastor	8
	20	The denominational tie	11
	9	The church's reputation	9
	7	The social outreach	5
	25	The worship style	19
	7	My friends are here	7
	15	Family	10
	0	The self-help groups	2
	10	Children/Youth Programs	4
	14	The music	18
	6	Adult education program	6
		God, Pastor Robinson	
Participation in Our Fellowship			
A future pastor is interested in knowing the activity of its members.			
1.	Length of Membership	Less than one year	0
		1-2 years	0
		3-5 years	4
		6-9 years	5
		10-19 years	14
		20 or more years	29

2.	Average worship service attendance during the past year	None	0	About once or twice a year	2	
		Once or twice every three months	1	Once a month	1	
		About once a month	2	About two/ three times a month	18	
		4 times a month or more	28			
3.	In how many church organizations, committees, and groups do you hold membership (not counting church membership itself)	None	One	Two	Three	Four or More
		5	12	14	10	9
4.	How many persons or families have you invited to visit or join our church in the past year?	None	One	Two	Three	Four or More
		9	7	6	10	18
		Daily	Few Times a Week	Once a Week	Few Times a Month	Seldom or Never
5.	How often do you spend time in private devotion: prayer, meditation, reading the Bible or other spiritual books?	36	8	3	5	1
6.	How often do you use the Web at home or at your office?	38	5	2	2	2
7.	How often do you use email?	35	4	1	2	3
8.	How often do you look at religious interest sites?	5	9	3	12	20
9..	How often do you volunteer your time in social service?	2	6	4	17	19
Faith Beliefs (Please rate)						
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
1.	There is no other way to salvation but through belief in Jesus Christ	45	5			

2.	Human beings have developed over millions of years from less advanced forms of life	4	7	12	23
3.	Jesus' resurrection from the dead was an actual event	43	9		1
4.	All religions are equally good ways of helping a person find ultimate truth,	4	14	22	9
5.	The Bible has answers for all of the basic questions of life.	42	9	1	1
6.	Social justice is at the heart of the Gospel.	22	17	7	
7.	It is often difficult to live out my faith in daily work, leisure and community life.	6	20	20	5

SNAPSHOT

Tasks of the Church (Top Five Answers per Category based on number of answers)
These are tasks that a local church is likely to perform. Please respond how you feel our church is doing in these areas.

Sharing the good news of the Gospel with the unchurched.

Providing a caring ministry for the sick, shut-in and bereaved.

Participating in activities and programs with other local religious groups.

Helping members understand their use of money, time and talents as expressions of Christian Stewardship.

Helping members discover their own gifts for ministry and service.

Tasks of the Pastor
 (top answers reflect highest numbers of responses down to lowest number of responses)

Very High Priority

Preparing and preaching inspiring sermons.

Developing and supporting religious education programs for children and youth.

Emphasizing the spiritual development of members.

Visiting the sick, shut-in and bereaved.

Providing administrative leadership for the congregation's ministry.

Actively and visibly supporting the church's stewardship program.

High Priority

Planning and leading a program of new member recruitment.

Directly involving laity in the planning and leadership of church programs and events.

Participating in local community activities, issues and problems.

Participating in denominational activities beyond the local church, that is, at the regional or national level.

Relate biblical teaching to contemporary social justice issues.

Developing and leading adult education programs.

Moderate Priority

Visiting members at their homes and/or other social settings outside the church.

Participating in local community activities, issues and problems.

Participating in denominational activities beyond the local church, that is, at the regional or national level.

Supporting the world mission of the church.

Directly involving laity in the planning and leadership of church programs and events.

Low Priority

Supporting the world mission of the church.

Relate biblical teaching to contemporary social justice issues.

Visiting members at their homes and/or other social settings outside of the church.

Participating in local community activities, issues and problems.

Participating in denominational activities beyond the local church, that is, at the regional or national level.

Style of Ministry

Listed below are pairs of characteristics of a good pastor including and beyond Sunday morning worship service. (Top selected answers in order of votes.)

Top Ten

Outgoing and socially engaging
 Has a relaxed interpersonal style
 Prioritizes costs in setting goals.
 Usually emphasizes the Bible.
 Helps people figure things out for themselves
 Welcomes new approaches and ideas
 Thought provoking and challenging
 Tends to be strong and decisive force in decisions

Tie:

Promotes congregational and lay leadership decision making.
 Strong emphasis on spiritual development

Tie:

Expertise in biblical and theological matters.
 Comforting and reassuring

Our Identity and Our Story – Who We Are

Female (predominantly)

Age 55-64

If there are children at home the majority age group:

- 1) Ages 13-18
- 2) Age 19 & over
- 3) Age 0-5/ Age 6-12

African American

Married

Household - One couple without children

Highest level of Formal Education – Post graduate work or degree

Member – Current Status – One person living alone

Employment Status

- 1) Employed full time
- 2) Retired
- 3) Employed Part Time

Occupation

- 1) Professional
- 2) Service worker
- 3) Clerical worker
- 4) Government
- 5) Sales; Transportation; Other (Auditor)

Income range – (most answered to least answered)

- \$25,000 – 49,999
- \$75,000 - \$99,000
- \$50,000 - \$74,000

How many years have you lived in the general area? 1) 26 or more 2) 20-25 years 3) 16-19 years
How likely is it that you will move in the next few years? 1) Very unlikely to move; 2) Probably will not move; 3) Might move 50/50
Why did you join First Baptist? 1) Worship style; 2) denominational tie; 3) the Pastor; 4) the music; 5) family
What keeps you at First Baptist? 1) Worship style; 2) the music 3) denominational tie; 4) church's reputation/family ; 5) the Pastor
Participation in our Fellowship (Top two answers) <i>A future pastor is interested in knowing the activity of its members.</i>
Length of membership: 1) 20 or more years; 2) 10-19 years
Average worship service attendance: 1) 4 times/month; 2) 2-3 times/month
Organizations, committee memberships: 1) Two 2) One
How many persons or families have you invited to visit...? 1) Four or more; 2) Three
How often do you spend time in private devotion...? 1) Daily; 2) Few Times a Week
How often do you use the web? 1) Daily, 2) Few times a week
How often do you use email? 1) Daily; 2) Few Times a Week/Seldom or Never
How often do you look at religious interest sites: 1) Seldom or Never; 2) Few Times a Month
How often do you volunteer your time in social service: 1) Seldom or Never; 2) Few Times a Month
Faith Beliefs
There is no other way to salvation but through belief in Jesus Christ. 1) Strongly agree; 2) Agree
Human beings have developed over millions of years from less advanced forms of life 1) Strongly disagree; 2) Disagree
Jesus' resurrection from the dead was an actual event 1) Strong agree; 2) Agree 3) Strongly disagree
All religions are equally good ways of helping a person find ultimate truth 1) Disagree, Agree, 2) Strongly disagree, 3) Strongly agree
The Bible has answers for all of the basic questions of life. 1) Strongly Agree; 2) Agree, 3) Disagree, 4) Strongly Disagree
Social justice is at the heart of the Gospel. 1) Strongly agree; 2) Agree 3) Disagree
It is often difficult to live out my faith in daily work, leisure and community life 1) Agree; 2) Disagree; 3) Strongly Disagree 4) Strongly Agree

APPENDIX H: TIMELINE

December 2020 interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Submit proposal for acceptance- Begin developing questionnaire- Solidify list of pastors and professionals to- Start online leadership courses
January 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Distribute questionnaires- Conduct interviews with professionals and pastors- Meet with faculty advisor
February 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Evaluate questionnaire and interview responses- Identify the two most achievable and effective suggestions- Develop plan to involve laity to aid in implementation- Meet with faculty advisor
March 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Implement plans and document activity- Meet with faculty advisor
April 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Continue implementation and documentation- Meet with faculty advisor
May 2021 accordingly	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Reevaluate method of execution and adjust- Meet with faculty advisor
June 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Continue implementation and documentation- Meet with faculty advisor
July 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Develop model to be maintained by laity- Recruit laity in the target demographic to run and maintain model
August 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Continue implementation and documentation- Begin writing with collected data- Meet with faculty advisor
September 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Continue implementation and documentation- Continue writing with collected data- Meet with faculty advisor

October 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue implementation and documentation - Continue writing with collected data - Meet with faculty advisor
November 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue implementation and documentation - Continue writing with collected data - Meet with faculty advisor
December 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue implementation and documentation - Continue writing with collected data - Meet with faculty advisor
January 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete writing
March 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Defend dissertation project

Bibliography

- Abraham, Mark. *Greater New Haven Community Index 2019*, DataHaven, 2019, https://www.ctdatahaven.org/sites/ctdatahaven/files/DataHaven_GNH_Community_Index_2019.pdf.
- Adichie, Chimamanda. "Now Is The Time to Talk about What We Are Actually Talking About." *The New Yorker*. December 2, 2016. <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/now-is-the-time-to-talk-about-what-we-are-actually-talking-about>.
- Agar, Michael H. *The Professional Stranger: An Informal Introduction to Ethnography*. 2nd ed. San Diego: Academic Press, 1996.
- Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in The Age of Colorblindness*. New York: New Press, 2012.
- Alexander, Steve Jr. "Black People Are Not A Monolith." *Psychology Today*. January 5, 2021. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/opening-the-door/202101/black-people-are-not-monolith>.
- Ali, Carroll A. Watkins. *Survival & Liberation: Pastoral Theology in African American Context*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1999.
- Ammerman, Nancy Tatom. *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.
- Bailey, Sarah Pulliam, and Michelle Boorstein. "Several Black Pastors Break with the Southern Baptist Convention over a Statement on Race." *The Washington Post*. WP Company, December 24, 2020. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2020/12/23/black-pastors-break-southern-baptist-critical-race-theory/>.
- Bakke, Raymond J. *Theology as Big as The City*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997.
- Baldwin, James. *The Fire Next Time*. New York: Vintage International, 1962.
- Banks, Adelle M. "More Multiracial Churches Led by Black, Hispanic Pastors." *Christianity Today*. January 17, 2020. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2020/january/more-multiracial-churches-black-hispanic-pastors-mosaix.html>.
- Baradaran, Mehrsa. *The Color of Money: Black Banks and The Racial Wealth Gap*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019.

- Bellinger, G. Michael. "Why I'll Be Marching with Sharpton." *New York Times*. February 13, 1999. <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/02/13/opinion/why-ill-be-marching-with-sharpton.html>.
- Bevans, Stephen B. *Models of Contextual Theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007.
- Biewen, John. "The Lie That Invented Racism." *Ted.com*. November 2019. https://www.ted.com/talks/john_biewen_the_lie_that_invented_racism.
- "'Black Power' Speech by Stokely Carmichael." *Encyclopedia.com*. 1966. <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/dictionaries-thesauruses-pictures-and-press-releases/black-power-speech-28-july-1966-stokely-carmichael>.
- Black Theology Project. "A Conversation with Four Millennial Preachers." *Base*. June 26, 2019. <https://btpbase.org/a-conversation-with-four-millennial-preachers/>.
- Blair, Christine Eaton. *The Art of Teaching The Bible: A Practical Guide for Adults*. Louisville: Geneva Press, 2001.
- Blair, Leonardo. "Conn. Governor Skewered for Suggesting Black Churches Should Lead Support for COVID-19 Vaccine." *The Christian Post*. September 14, 2021. <https://www.christianpost.com/news/conn-governor-skewered-for-suggesting-black-churches-should-lead-support-for-covid-19-vaccine.html>.
- Bloxsom, Bill. "Milford Clergy Lie Silent on Ground to Note Last Minutes of George Floyd's Life." *Newhavenregister.com*. June 5, 2020. <https://www.nhregister.com/news/article/Milford-clergy-lay-silent-on-ground-to-note-last-15318312.php>.
- . "Milford Native Digs into City's Revolutionary Past." *New Haven Register*. March 2, 2021. <https://www.nhregister.com/news/article/Milford-native-digs-into-city-s-revolutionary-15990238.php>.
- Blumberg, Antonia. "Activist Bree Newsome Reveals Staggering Faith During Confederate Flag Action." *Huffpost.com*. June 30, 2015. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/bree-newsome-faith_n_7692004.
- "Boomers, Gen X, Gen Y, and Gen Z Explained." *Kasasa.com*. July 6, 2020. <https://www.kasasa.com/articles/generations/gen-x-gen-y-gen-z>.
- Bossidy, Larry, and Ram Charan. *Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done*. New York: Crown Business, 2002.
- Branson, Mark Lau. *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry, Missional Engagement, And Congregational Change*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016.
- Buckingham, Marcus, and Curt Coffman. *First, Break All The Rules*. New York: Gallup Press, 2016.

- Bunn, Curtis. "Why Most Black Office Workers Are Dreading The Return To Offices." *NBC News*. July 29, 2021. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/black-office-workers-are-dreading-return-offices-20rcna1539>.
- Butanis, Benjamin. "The Importance of Hela Cells." *Hopkins Medicine*. April 11, 2017. <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/henriettalacks/importance-of-hela-cells.html>.
- Byrne, Rhonda. *The Secret*. New York: Atria Books, 2006.
- Caballero, Luzdelia. "Tucson Pastor Speaks Out Following Decision on Breonna Taylor Case." *KGUN9.com*. September 23, 2020. <https://www.kgun9.com/news/america-in-crisis/tucson-pastor-speaks-out-following-decision-on-breonna-taylor-case>.
- Cain, Susan. *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in A World That Can't Stop Talking*. New York: Broadway Paperbacks, 2013.
- Cannon, Katie G. *Katie's Canon: Womanism and The Soul of The Black Community*. New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1995.
- Cashin, Sheryll. *The Failures of Integration*. New York: Public Affairs, 2004.
- Cathey, Libby. "Black Minneapolis Pastor Calls on White Evangelicals to 'Speak Up' In Wake of George Floyd's Death." *ABC News.com*. June 7, 2020. <https://abcnews.go.com/US/black-minneapolis-pastor-calls-white-evangelicals-speak-wake/story?id=71114467>.
- Cayne, Bernard S. *The New Webster's Dictionary of The English Language*. New York: Lexicon Publications, 1995.
- Christian, Tanya A. "Black Church Leaders Accuse Trump Campaign of White Supremacist Propaganda." *Essence*. December 6, 2020. <https://www.essence.com/news/black-church-leaders-rebuke-new-trump-ad/>.
- Coates, Ta-Nehisi. *The Beautiful Struggle*. New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2008.
- . *The Water Dancer*. New York: One World, 2019.
- Cone, James Hal. *God of The Oppressed*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1975.
- Cone, James H. *My Soul Looks Back*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000.
- Cose, Ellis. "The Black Gender Gap." *Newsweek*. March 2, 2003. <https://www.newsweek.com/black-gender-gap-132915>.
- . *The End of Anger: A New Generation's Take on Race and Rage*. New York: HarperCollins, 2011.
- . "NPR Author Interviews." *NPR*. May 31, 2011. <https://www.npr.org/2011/05/31/136824394/the-end-of-anger-and-the-beginning-of-optimism>.
- . *The Rage of A Privileged Class*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1995.

- Cox, Kiana, and Jeff Diamant. "Black Men Less Religious than Black Women, but More Religious than White Women, Men." Pew Research Center. September 10, 2020. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/09/26/black-men-are-less-religious-than-black-women-but-more-religious-than-white-women-and-men/>.
- "Crack vs. Heroine Project: Racial Double Standard in Drug Laws Persists Today." *Equal Justice Initiative*. December 9, 2019. <https://eji.org/news/racial-double-standard-in-drug-laws-persists-today/>.
- Crawford, A. Elaine Brown. *Hope in The Holler: A Womanist Theology*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.
- Daley, James. *Great Speeches by African Americans*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2006.
- Dance, Daryl Cumber. *Shuckin' and Jivin'*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978.
- Delpit, Lisa D. *Other People's Children*. New York: New Press, 2006.
- DiAngelo, Robin J. *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2018.
- Dietrich, Walter, and Ulrich Luz. *The Bible in A World Context: An Experiment in Contextual Hermeneutics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Erdmans, 2002.
- Dimock, Michael. "Defining Generations: Where Millennials End and Generation Z Begins." *Pew Research Center*. January 17, 2019. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/>.
- Douglas, Kelly Brown. *Sexuality and The Black Church*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999.
- . *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and The Justice of God*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2015.
- . *The Black Christ*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2019.
- Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of The Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2003.
- Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk (Original Classic Edition)*. New York: G&D Media, 2019.
- Dudley, Drew. "Everyday Leadership." *Ted.com*. September 2010. https://www.ted.com/talks/drew_dudley_everyday_leadership?language=en.
- Dupuis, Jacques. *Who Do You Say I Am? Introduction to Christology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994.
- Dyson, Michael Eric. *Is Bill Cosby Right?* New York: Basic Civitas, 2005.

- . *Michael Eric Dyson Reader*. New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2004.
- . *Tears We Cannot Stop*. 1st ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2017.
- . *Why I Love Black Women*. New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2004.
- Edmondson, Ron. "5 Mistakes Pastors Make with Church Finances." *Facts & Trends*. April 13, 2015. <https://factsandtrends.net/2015/04/13/top-5-mistakes-pastors-make-with-church-finances/>.
- Edwards, Korie L. *The Elusive Dream: The Power of Race in Interracial Churches*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Ellison, Gregory C. *Cut Dead but Still Alive: Caring for African American Young Men*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013.
- Emba, Christine. "'Reclaiming My Time' Is Bigger Than Maxine Waters." *Chicago Tribune*. August 1, 2017. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/lifestyles/ct-reclaiming-my-time-maxine-waters-20171228-story.html>.
- Emerson, Michael O., and Christian Smith. *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and The Problem of Race in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Epperson, Sharon. "Black Women Make Nearly \$1 Million Less than White Men during Their Careers." *CNBC*. August 3, 2021. <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/08/03/black-women-make-1-million-less-than-white-men-during-their-careers.html>.
- Evans, Colin. *Great Feuds in History*. New York: Falls River Press, 2006.
- Felder, Cain Hope. *Troubling Biblical Waters: Race, Class, and Family*. Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1997.
- "First Baptist Clothes Closet Provides Clothing for Those in Need." *Milford Mirror*. October 15, 2016. <https://www.milfordmirror.com/news/community/article/First-Baptist-Clothes-Closet-provides-clothing-13883791.php>.
- Flake, Floyd H., Elaine McCollins Flake, and Edwin C. Reed. *African American Church Management Handbook*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2005.
- "For Black Americans, The Black Church Counters Feelings of Political Powerlessness." *Barna Group*, January 18, 2021. <https://www.barna.com/research/black-church-politics/>.
- Forman Jr., James. *Locking Up Our Own: Crime and Punishment in Black America*. New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2017.
- Fox, Zeni. *New Ecclesial Ministry: Lay Professionals Serving The Church*. Franklin, WI: Sheed & Ward, 2002.
- Frazier, Edward Franklin. *Black Bourgeoisie*. New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1997.

- Frazier, Edward F. *The Negro Church in America*. New York: Schocken Books, 1976.
- Frederick, Marla Faye. *Between Sundays*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.
- Freedman, Samuel G. *Upon This Rock*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1994.
- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of The Oppressed*. New York: Continuum, 2011.
- Gafney, Wil. "The Atatiana Jefferson Shooting in Fort Worth Shows Black People, Again, That We Aren't Safe Here." *NBC News*. October 17, 2019.
<https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/atatiana-jefferson-shooting-fort-worth-shows-black-people-again-we-ncna1067831>.
- Gates, Henry Louis. *The Black Church: This Is Our Story, This Is Our Song*. New York: Penguin Press, 2021.
- . "100 Amazing Facts About the Negro: The Truth Behind '40 Acres and A Mule.'" *PBS*. September 18, 2013. <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/african-americans-many-rivers-to-cross/history/the-truth-behind-40-acres-and-a-mule/>.
- and June Cross. "The Two Nations of Black America." *PBS*. February 10, 1998.
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/race/etc/script.html>.
- and Maria Tatar. *The Annotated African American Folktales*. 1st ed. New York: Liveright Publishing, 2008.
- and Cornel West. *The Future of The Race*. New York: Vintage Books, 1997.
- "Generation Why?" *Film Freeway*. 2019. <https://filmfreeway.com/generationwhY577>.
- Ginsburg, Ruth Bader. *My Own Words*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016.
- Gladwell, Malcolm. *David and Goliath*. New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2013.
- Golden, Sherita Hill. "Coronavirus in African Americans and Other People of Color." *Hopkins Medicine*. April 20, 2020.
<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/covid19-racial-disparities>.
- Goldingay, John. *Models for Interpretation of Scripture*. Toronto: Clements, 2004.
- Goldratt, Eliyahu M, and Jeff Cox. *The Goal: A Process of Ongoing Improvement*. Great Barrington, MA: North River Press, 2004.
- Graham, Lawrence. *Our Kind of People: Inside America's Black Upper Class*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2000.
- Grant, Jacquelyn. *White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989.
- Griffin, D. Darrell. *Navigating Pastoral Leadership in The Transition Zone*. Chicago: MMGI Books, 2012.

- Grimm, Joe. *100 Questions and Answers about Gen X: Forged by Economics, Technology, Pop Culture, and Work*. Canton, MI: Front Edge Publishing, 2019.
- Guadal, Jhonson, and Hunt. "Defining Characteristics & Values of the Past 5 Generations." *Growing Leaders*, June 13, 2017.
<https://growingleaders.com/blog/last-five-generations-changed-us>.
- Gula, Richard M. *Ethics in Pastoral Ministry*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1996.
- Harris, James H. *Pastoral Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.
- Hendricks, Obery M. *Christians Against Christianity: How Right-Wing Evangelicals Are Destroying Our Nation and Our Faith*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2021.
- Hewlin, Patricia F. "Wearing The Cloak: Antecedents and Consequences of Creating Facades of Conformity." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 94. no. 3, 2009.
- Hill, Kenneth H. *Religious Education in The African American Tradition*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2007.
- Hobson, Mellody. "Color Blind or Color Brave?" *Ted.com*. March 2014.
https://www.ted.com/talks/mellody_hobson_color_blind_or_color_brave#t-105656.
- Honoré, Leslé. *Fist & Fire: Poems to Inspire Action and Ignite Passion*. Chicago: Tacos and Gumbo Productions, 2017.
- Hough, Horace, and Edgar Russell. "Letter to The Editor: Talk of a 'Rigged' Election Helps No One." *Connecticut Post*. October 1, 2020.
<https://www.ctpost.com/opinion/article/Letter-to-the-editor-Talk-of-a-rigged-15609427.php>.
- "How COVID-19 Has Impacted The Black Church." *Barna.com*. 2020.
<https://www.barna.com/research/covid-19-impacted-black-church/>.
- Hurlbert, Marc. "Why Black Women Are More Likely to Die of Breast Cancer." *Breast Cancer Research Foundation*. October 4, 2016. <https://www.bcrf.org/blog/why-black-women-are-more-likely-die-breast-cancer/>.
- "Jackson, Joseph Harrison." *The Martin Luther King, Jr., Research and Education Institute*. May 22, 2018. <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/jackson-joseph-harrison>.
- Jakes, T. D. *Don't Drop the Mic: The Power of Your Words Can Change The World*. New York: Faith Words, n.d.
- Johnson, Jenna. "Donald Trump to African American and Hispanic Voters: 'What Do You Have To Lose?'" *Washington Post*. August 22, 2016.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2016/08/22/donald-trump-to-african-american-and-hispanic-voters-what-do-you-have-to-lose/?arc404=true>.

- Jones, Jeffrey M. "U.S. Church Membership Falls Below Majority for First Time." *Gallup.com*.
March 29, 2021. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/341963/church-membership-20falls-below-majority-first-time.aspx>.
- Jones, Kirk Byron. *Soul Talk: How to Have The Most Important Conversation of All*. Monee, IL: Soaring Sprit Press, 2018.
- Jude 3 Project. "Exclusivity vs. Inclusivity: Is Jesus The Only Way?" *Youtube.com*. 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zswFQ0Vacw>.
- . "Paul's Sexual Ethics." *Youtube.com*. October 30, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NlkomtAX6o8>.
- . "Preaching to Black Millennials ." *Youtube.com*. September 28, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSxHOs1yzQE>.
- . "The Divided Mind of The Church." *Youtube.com*. October 17, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LoN7nUoFRcg>.
- "Judge Walker Obituary - *Connecticut Post*." *Legacy.com*. 2018. <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/ctpost/obituary.aspx?n=judge-h-walker&pid=189405704&fhid=4787>.
- Kendi, Ibram X. *Stamped from The Beginning*. New York: Bold Type Books, 2017.
- King, Martin Luther Jr. "Letter From a Birmingham Jail [King, Jr.]" *Africa.Upenn.edu*. 1963 https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html.
- . "MLK: Beyond Vietnam - A Time to Break Silence." *Youtube.com*. July 6, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AJhgXKGldUk>.
- Kinnaman, David, and Gabe Lyons. *Unchristian*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008.
- Lamont, Office of Gov. Ned. "Conn. Governor Skewered for Suggesting Black Churches Should Lead Support for COVID-19 Vaccine." *The Christian Post*, September 14, 2020. <https://www.christianpost.com/news/conn-governor-skewered-for-suggesting-black-churches-should-lead-support-for-covid-19-vaccine.html>.
- Landry, Bart. *The New Black Middle Class in The Twenty-First Century*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2018.
- LaRue, Cleophus J. *Power in The Pulpit*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.
- . *The Heart of Black Preaching*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006.
- Lee, Morgan. "What Ahmaud Arbery's Death Recalls about Lynching and Church History." *Christianity Today*. May 13, 2020.

- <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/may-web-only/ahmaud-arbery-lynching-african-americans-christians-respond.html>.
- Lemon, Jason. "Evangelical Pastor Claims People in Heaven Are 'Crying Out' About Voter Fraud: Angels Have Been Dispatched." *Newsweek*. November 17, 2020. <https://www.newsweek.com/evangelical-pastor-claims-people-heaven-are-crying-out-about-voter-fraud-angels-have-been-1548178>.
- Liebow, Elliot. *Tally's Corner: A Study of Negro Streetcorner Men*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003.
- Light, Alan. 1999. *The Vibe History of Hip Hop*. New York: Three Rivers Press.
- "List Of Sites | Freedom Trail | Connecticut Freedom Trail." *CT Freedom Trail*. 2021. <http://ctfreedomtrail.org/trail/freedom/sites/>.
- Loewen, James W. *Lies My Teacher Told Me*. New York: Touchstone, 2007.
- Lummis, Adair T. "'Heart and Head' in Reaching Pastors of Black Churches." *Hartford Institute for Religion Research*. 2020. http://hirr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/lummis_article5.html.
- Mathis, Dara T. "The Church's Black Exodus." *The Atlantic*. October 11, 2020. <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2020/10/why-black-parishioners-are-leaving-churches/616588>.
- Maxwell, John C. *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007.
- . *The Leadership Handbook*. Nashville: Nelson Books, 2008.
- McCray, Walter Arthur. *The Black Presence in The Bible*. Chicago: Black Light Fellowship, 1990.
- McCullough, David G. *1776*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005.
- McIntosh, Gary. *One Size Doesn't Fit All: Bringing Out The Best in Any Size Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 2003.
- McLoughlin, Pamela. "The Price Is Always Right at The Milford 'Clothes Closet'." *New Haven Register*. December 13, 2010. <https://www.nhregister.com/news/article/The-price-is-always-right-at-the-Milford-Clothes-11617063.php>.
- McMickle, Marvin Andrew. *Preaching to The Black Middle Class: Words of Challenge, Words of Hope*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2000.
- McMickle, Marvin A. *Where Have All The Prophets Gone? Reclaiming Prophetic Preaching in America*. Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2019.
- Meacham, Jon. *The Soul of America: The Battle for Our Better Angels*. New York: Random House, 2018.

- “Megachurch Definition.” The definition of a Megachurch from Hartford Institute for Religion Research. Accessed January 25, 2022.
<http://hrr.hartsem.edu/megachurch/definition.html>.
- Mehta, Hemant. “Imitating Jesus, Preacher Flips Table in Reaction to Supposed Election Fraud.” *Friendlyatheist.Patheos.com*. November 23, 2020.
<https://friendlyatheist.patheos.com/2020/11/23/imitating-jesus-preacher-flips-table-in-reaction-to-supposed-election-fraud/>.
- “Milford – Historic Buildings of Connecticut.” *Historic Buildings of Connecticut*. 2012.
<http://historicbuildingsct.com/category/towns/milford/>.
- “Milford | Datahaven.” *CT Datahaven*. 2018.
<https://www.ctdatahaven.org/profiles/milford>.
- “Milford History: First Baptist Church Was Incorporated in 1895.” *Milford Mirror*. March 5, 2018. <https://www.milfordmirror.com/news/article/Milford-history-First-Baptist-Church-was-13893683.php>.
- Mitchell, Henry H. *Celebration and Experience in Preaching*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990.
- Mitchell, Joshua. *Black Millennials & The Church*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2018.
- Mohamed, Besheer, Kiana Cox, Jeff Diamant, and Claire Gecewicz. “Faith and Religion Among Black Americans.” *Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project*. February 16, 2021. <https://www.pewforum.org/2021/02/16/faith-among-black-americans/>.
- Moss, Otis III. *Blue Note Preaching in A Post-Soul World*. 1st ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013.
- “Multiracial Congregations May Not Bridge Racial Divide.” *NPR*. July 17, 2020.
<https://www.npr.org/2020/07/17/891600067/multiracial-congregations-may-not-bridge-racial-divide>.
- Normen, Elizabeth J. *African American Connecticut Explored*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2013.
- “NVSS - Provisional Death Counts for Covid-19 - Executive Summary.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, April 23, 2021. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/covid19/mortality-overview.htm>.
- Obama, Barack. *A Promised Land*. New York: Crown, 2020.
- . “July 19, 2013: Remarks on Trayvon Martin | Miller Center.” *Miller Center*. May 4, 2017. <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/july-19-2013-remarks-trayvon-martin>.

- . 2006. *The Audacity of Hope*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Obama, Michelle. *Becoming*. 1st ed. New York: Crown Publishing, 2018.
- Oden, Thomas C. *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1983.
- Ortoleva, Daniel. “Milford Hall of Fame Reverend Charles D. Walker.” *Milford Hall of Fame*. 2020. <http://milfordhalloffame.org/walker-reverend-charles-d>.
- “Ovarian Cancer Studies Aim to Reduce Racial Disparities.” *National Cancer Institute*. July 16, 2020. <https://www.cancer.gov/news-events/cancer-currents-blog/2020/ovarian-cancer-racial-disparities-studies>.
- Paris, Peter J. *The Social Teaching of The Black Churches*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985.
- Parker, Brianna K. *What Google Can't Give: The Relevancy of the Church for Black Millennials in the Tech Age*. Mansfield, TX: Black Millennial Café, 2018.
- Parker, Evelyn L. *Trouble Don't Last Always*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2003.
- Patterson, James T. *Freedom Is Not Enough: The Moynihan Report and America's Struggle over Black Family Life-- from LBJ to Obama*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2010.
- Pelikan, Jaroslav. *Jesus Through The Centuries: His Place in The History of Culture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.
- Perry, Andre M., and Carl Romer. “The Black Middle Class Needs Political Attention, Too.” *Brookings*. February 27, 2020. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-black-middle-class-needs-political-attention-too/>.
- Persell, Caroline Hodges. *Education and Inequality*. London: Collier-Macmillan, 1977.
- Proctor, Samuel D. *The Certain Sound of The Trumpet*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1994.
- Public Enemy. *Fight The Power*. CD. Los Angeles: Motown Records, 1989.
- Raboteau, Albert J. *Slave Religion: The “Invisible Institution” in The Antebellum South*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Rainer, Thom S. *Who Moved My Pulpit?* Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2016.
- Rampersad, Arnold ed. *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*. New York: Vintage Books, 1995.
- Raushenbush, Paul Brandeis. “Trayvon Martin ‘Not Guilty’ Verdict Sparks Hoodie Sunday at Black Churches.” *Huffpost.com*. July 14, 2013. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/trayvon-martin-hoodie-sunday_n_3594302.

- Reeves, Richard V., and Katherine Guyot. "Black Women Are Earning More College Degrees, But That Alone Won't Close Race Gaps." *Brookings*. December 4, 2017. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/social-mobility-memos/2017/12/04/black-women-are-earning-more-college-degrees-but-that-alone-wont-close-race-gaps/>.
- "Religion in America: U.S. Religious Data, Demographics and Statistics." *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project*, September 9, 2020. <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/older-millennial/religious-tradition/historically-black-protestant/>.
- Remnick, David. *King of The World*. New York: Random House, 1998.
- "Rev. Jeremiah Wright, "Confusing God and Government." *Black Past*. 2008. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/2008-rev-jeremiah-wright-confusing-god-and-government/>.
- Roberts, Laura Morgan, Anthony J. Mayo, and David A. Thomas. *Race, Work, and Leadership*. Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing, 2019.
- Rochester, Shawn D. *The Black Tax: The Cost of Being Black in America*. Southbury, CT: Good Steward Publishing, 2017.
- Roeder, Amy. "America Is Failing Its Black Mothers." *Harvard Public Health Magazine*. 2019. https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/magazine/magazine_article/america-is-failing-its-black-mothers/.
- Rothstein, Richard. *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*. New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2017.
- Ruff, Matt. *Lovecraft Country*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2017.
- "Salary.com Salary Wizard- Do You Know What You're Worth? Salary-Calculator." Salary.com. Accessed January 3, 2022. <https://www.salary.com/tools/salary-calculator/professor-english/06460-milford-ct>.
- Sanders, James A. *The Monotheizing Process*. Eugene: Cascade Books, 2014.
- Schultz, Abby. "How Millennials Are Changing The Face of Philanthropy." *Barrons*. December 5, 2016. <https://www.barrons.com/articles/how-millennials-are-changing-the-face-of-philanthropy-1480984160>.
- Sensing, Tim. *Qualitative Research*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2011.
- Shakur, Tupac. *Keep Your Head Up*. CD. New York: Interscope, 1993.
- . *White Man 'z World*. CD. Los Angeles: Death Row/Interscope, 1996.
- Shalal, Andrea. "After George Floyd's Death, A Groundswell of Religious Activism." *Reuters*. June 9, 2020. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-minneapolis-police-usa>

religion/after-george-floyds-death-a-groundswell-of-religious-activism-idUSKBN23G1FS.

- Shange, Ntozake. *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When The Rainbow Is Enuf*. New York: Collier Books, 1977.
- Shelton, Jason E., and Michael O. Emerson. *Blacks and Whites in Christian America: How Racial Discrimination Shapes Religious Convictions*. New York: NYU Press, 2012.
- Sims, Darryl D. *Evangelizing and Empowering The Black Male*. Chicago: MMGI Books, 2009.
- . *Sound The Trumpet Again!* Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2004.
- Sinek, Simon. *Leaders Eat Last*. New York: Penguin, 2017.
- Smiley, Tavis. *The Covenant with Black America*. 1st ed. Chicago: Third World Press, 2006.
- Smith, Christine M. *Preaching Justice: Ethnic and Cultural Perspectives*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2008.
- Smith, Efrem, and Phil Jackson. *The Hip-Hop Church: Connecting with The Movement Shaping Our Culture*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2005.
- Smith, Mitzi J. *Womanist Sass and Talk Back*. Eugene: Cascade Books, 2018.
- Stanley, Andy, and Tim Elmore. “April 2019: Generational Diversity in the Workplace, Part 1.” *Andy Stanley Leadership Podcast*, December 4, 2019.
<https://andystanley.com/podcast/generational-diversity-in-the-workplace/>.
- Starling, David Ian. *Hermeneutics as Apprenticeship*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016.
- Streeter, Dawn-Marie. “Pressing for Change of Venerable Names.” *New York Times*. February 26, 1995. <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/02/26/nyregion/pressing-for-change-of-venerable-names.html>.
- Strong, James. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of The Bible/Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary*. Gordonsville, TN: Dugan Publisher's, Inc., 1984.
- Sullivan, Laura, Tajana Meschede, Lars Dietrich, and Thomas Shapiro. “The Racial Wealth Gap: Why Policy Matters.” *Demos*. 2015.
https://www.demos.org/sites/default/files/publications/RacialWealthGap_2.pdf.
- Taylor, Ouida F. “Vacations at Taylor’s Playfair.” *Collections.Si.edu*. 2021.
https://collections.si.edu/search/detail/edanmdm:nmaahc_2014.112.113?q=record_ID%3Dnmaahc_2014.112.113&record=1&hlterm=record_ID%3Dnmaahc_2014.112.113.

- “The Whys and Hows of Generations Research.” *Pew Research Center - U.S. Politics & Policy*. Pew Research Center, July 28, 2020.
<https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2015/09/03/the-whys-and-hows-of-generations-research/>.
- Thomas, Frank A. *How to Preach A Dangerous Sermon*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2018.
- . *Introduction to the Practice of African American Preaching*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016.
- . *They Like to Never Quit Praisin’ God*. Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2013.
- . “A Conversation with Dr. Howard-John Wesley Hosted by Dr. Frank A. Thomas.” *Youtube.com*. February 8, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1a-6CqrnkhE&t=3s>.
- . “Preaching of Black Women and Womanists - #Africanamericanpreaching Ep21.” *Youtube.com*. May 30, 2017.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HDMUvT8Tg9s>.
- Thurman, Howard. *Jesus and The Disinherited*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1976.
- Trull, Joe E., and James E. Carter. *Ministerial Ethics: Moral Formation for Church Leaders*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004.
- Trussell, Jacqueline. “The Convention Movement of The Black Baptist Church.” *Black and Christian*. 2000.
<http://www.blackandchristian.com/articles/academy/trussell1.shtml>.
- Turman, Rev. Eboni Marshall. “A Theological Statement from The Black Church on Juneteenth.” *Color Lines*. June 19, 2020.
<https://www.colorlines.com/articles/theological-statement-black-church-juneteenth>.
- “Urban Dictionary: Nig’s Pond.” *Urbandictionary.com*. 2007.
<https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Nig27s20Pond>.
- Vibe Magazine*. “VIBE Presents: Tupac’s ‘Lost’ Interview.” *Youtube.com*. September 15, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4zAdiWMG1Q>.
- “Walker Pond Fishing Near Milford, Connecticut.” *Hook and Bullet*. 2020.
<https://www.hookandbullet.com/fishing-walker-pond-milford-ct/>.
- Walker, Charles D. “Charles D. Walker Papers.” *New York Public Library*. 2020.
<http://archives.nypl.org/scm/20588>.
- Warnock, Raphael G. *The Divided Mind of The Black Church*. New York: NYU Press, 2014.
- Washington, Harriet A. *Medical Apartheid*. New York: Anchor Books, 2008.
- Watkins, Michael. *The First 90 Days*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2003.

- Weems, Renita J. *Just A Sister Away*. New York: Warner Books, 2005.
- Wieczner, Jen. "The Case of the Missing Toilet Paper: How the Coronavirus Exposed U.S. Supply Chain Flaws." *Fortune*. May 21, 2020.
<https://fortune.com/2020/05/18/toilet-paper-sales-surge-shortage-coronavirus-pandemic-supply-chain-cpg-panic-buying/>.
- West, Cornel. *Race Matters*. New York: Vintage Books, 1994.
- West, Ralph D. "Commentary: Where I Stand on The Statement by SBC Seminary Presidents." *Baptist Standard*. December 16, 2020.
<https://www.baptiststandard.com/opinion/other-opinions/commentary-where-i-stand-on-the-statement-by-sbc-seminary-presidents/>.
- Wilcox, W. Bradford, Ronald B. Mincy, and Wendy Wang. "2.5 Million Black Men Are In The Upper Class." July 23, 2018. *Institute for Family Studies*.
<https://ifstudies.org/blog/2-5-million-black-men-are-in-the-upper-class>.
- Wiley, Ralph. *Why Black People Tend to Shout*. New York: Penguin Books, 1991.
- Wilkerson, Isabel. *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*. New York: Vintage Books, 2011.
- Willimon, William H. *Shaped by The Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990.
- Wright, Almeda M. *The Spiritual Lives of Young African-Americans*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Young, William P. *The Shack*. Newbury Park, CA: Windblown Media, 2007.
- Zoboi, Ibi, and Yusef Salaam. *Punching The Air*. New York: Balzer and Bray, 2021.